

Second Edition.

SOBER REFLECTIONS

ON

BURKE'S LETTER.

(PRICE 2s. 6d.)

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SOBER REFLECTIONS

ON THE

SEDITIONOUS AND INFLAMMATORY

LETTER

OF

THE RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE,

TO

A NOBLE LORD.

ADDRESSED TO THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF HIS

FELLOW CITIZENS,

BY JOHN THELWALL.

"Next Anger rush'd—his eyes on fire,
"In lightning's own his secret stings."

LONDON:

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1796.

AS the following pages are intended, in some
fort, as a reply to the inflammatory misre-
presentations and incongruous principles of a
recent pamphlet, from the elegant and abusive
pen of Mr. BURKE, it might have been expected,
perhaps, that I should have followed the example
of my antagonist, by throwing my observations
into the form of a letter, and addressing it either
to some great personage, or to that antagonist
himself. But it has long been a principle with
me, that, as far as it is practicable, at least, in
the state of society in which we live, our open
profession and our real object should always be
the same; and I have been frequently disposed
to suspect that all colourable pretences, all habits
of subterfuge, even in circumstances of the most
apparent indifference, have a tendency to weaken
the moral feelings, and produce a bias of mind
eminently unfavourable to rectitude of judgment,
and that enthusiastic attachment to the cause of
truth, which is, in reality, the noblest attribute
of a cultivated understanding. There is a manly

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and independent energy of mind, encouraged by a scrupulous adherence, not only to the *essence*, but even to the *shews* and *forms* of sincerity, which a friend of liberty ought to be particularly zealous to preserve. I therefore address these animadversions on one of the most extraordinary pamphlets that ever were published, openly and avowedly to my fellow citizens, for whose advantage they are principally intended; and from whom, alone, I have the vanity to expect any considerable portion of attention: for I have not the fortune (good or bad—as “the zealots of the *old* sect in philosophy and politics*,” may choose to consider it) to be either the pensioned *dependant*, friend, or correspondant of any noble lord, with whose honours I might emblazon my title-page; and, as for Mr. *Burke* himself, the distemper of his mind is so evident in every thing which of late years he has either said or written, that it is impossible to expect from him the smallest degree of candid attention to the arguments of one whom, upon no better evidence than the suggestions of his own furious prejudices, he stigmatizes as “a wicked pander to avarice and ambition†.” The hydrophobia of alarm rages too fiercely in his mind, to suffer him to wet his lips with the sober stream of reason, or turn to the salutary

food

* Letter, &c. p. 1. Ibid. p. 47.
 † Ibid. p. 1. Ibid. p. 47.

food of impartial investigation. All is rage, and foam, and headlong precipitancy; and the individual must be as mad as himself who expects any thing but to be torn by his invenomed tooth, from an attempt to stop him in his career, or turn him to the right, or to the left, to examine the grounds over which he is so furiously running.

Let me, however, be understood: I apply this metaphor not in the bitterness of malévolence, but in the kindness of pity. I would not willingly—even if my feeble lance were capable of piercing the seven-fold shield of literary and aristocratic pride by which my oponent is defended,—I would not wantonly tear with fresh wounds, a breast already bleeding with the keenest anguish of paternal affliction.

Mr. *Burke* does not, perhaps, expect so much candour and moderation from one whose principles are diametrically opposite to his own; and who does not even shrink from the imputation of being a *Democrat*, a *Jacobin*, or a *Sans Culotte*: [for it is too much the habit with the violent of all parties, to suppose that there can be nothing virtuous or liberal in the character of any man who is of an opposite principle to themselves:] yet when I peruse the pathetic passage in this beautiful, but mischievous letter, *I feel*, though prejudice may not believe, that I can sympathise

with the afflictions of an enemy; even when, from that perversion, from which the finest understandings are not exempt, he happens, according to my judgement, to be the enemy, also, of the human race. In one respect, also, I have ever been ambitious of emulating the *chivalrous spirit* of our ancient heroes. I can venerate the talents and enthusiasm employed against my own cause; and (in the more liberal acceptation of the phrase) as *Shakespeare* expresses it—

“ *Envy their great deservings and high merits,*

“ *Because they are not of our determination,*

“ *But stand against us as an enemy.*”

I should not, therefore, exult if Mr. *Burke's* “*feelings*” were, in reality, what he calls them, “*nearly extinguished**”; I do not exult to find them, on the contrary, the most irritable that ever burned (like a hot-ach) under the frost of age: far less do I exult in those incongruities of mind, which exhibit reason in its dotage, while the imagination is still rioting in all the vigour and luxuriancy of youth. I bow with veneration to the gigantic powers of his unwearied intellect; I gaze with rapture upon the splendid effusions of his inexhaustible fancy; and I have not the savage ignorance to suppose that if I had the will,

philms of a vigorous mind are subject to just conclusion: for the energy with which

* Letter, &c. p. 2.

or

or the power, to destroy his reputation, I could transfer his genius to myself, or plant his honours upon my own brow. Nor, indeed, when the subject is weighed in the important scale of effects and consequences, have the friends of liberty any serious cause to lament his exertions. The provocation of political discussion is the grand desideratum for political improvement: and, so far is the gall of personal animosity from my pen, that, in the fervent sincerity of soul, I can exclaim—"Far, far may that period be removed, when fate or caprice shall inflict upon him either the silence of death, or the death of silence!"

I could wish, indeed, that a mind so rich, so cultivated, so powerful, were upon the side of truth: but if he will but write, take whatever side he will, I am sure that truth will be derived from his labours: for I defy Mr. *Burke*, or any other individual of penetrating and energetic mind, under what unfortunate delusion soever he may labour, to publish a pamphlet of eighty pages, without bringing forward some important observations, which, on account of their firm foundation in justice, will remain, while those which are false will be exposed and rejected by the discussion which such publications cannot fail of producing. Nay, the very absurdities and sophisms of a vigorous mind are subservient to just conclusion: for, from the energy with which they

be/ they are expressed, they take fast hold upon the imagination, and compell the reflecting reader to give them that repeated revision which, unless the mind is very considerably warped by the strong bias of interested prejudice, cannot fail of conducting the enquirer to principles of liberty and justice.

In this point of view, the cause of liberty has essential obligations to the pen of Mr. *Burke*. He has written books which have converted such of his *disinterested* readers, as were in the habit of thinking for themselves, from the cause he endeavoured to uphold, to that which it was his object to overthrow; he has provoked answers, which, extending the boundaries of science beyond the narrow pale of opulence, have carried the invaluable discussion of political principles and civil rights to the shopboard of the artificer, and the cottage of the laborious husbandman; and his ungovernable phrenzy has hurried him into *expressions* and *epithets* so repugnant to every principle of justice and humanity*, and so revoltingly disgusting to the common sympathies of nature, as could not fail of producing a very general conviction, I will not say, as some have said, of the rottenness of his heart (for who shall judge of the *motives* of man, or set bounds to the omnipotency

* Reflections, &c. and I shall have to take notice of other expressions, still more repugnant to justice and humanity, which I shall have to take notice of.

of self-delusion!) but of the weakness and injustice of that cause which could reduce such talents to the necessity of appealing to weapons so gross and so unmanly.

In this last species of warfare the fury of my present antagonist has been at least sufficiently seconded by the *metaphysical* phrenzy of his friend Mr. Windham. Indeed, if this gentleman had been hired by the *Jacobins of France to disgust all ranks of people* (placemen, pensioners, and dependants alone excepted) *with the laws, government, and constitution of this country*, he could not have proceeded to more wanton insults upon their feelings. To say nothing of his quotation, and direct application of that line from *Shakespeare*,

“ If Richard’s fit to live, let Richmond fall: ”

Which, if it meant any thing, was referring the question to this bloody arbitrement—*either these reformers ought to die by the hands of government, or the governing party by the hands of the reformers;—what shall we say to “acquitted felons,” “killed off,” and a variety of other sentences, of whose “vitality” this subtle, Machiavelian secretary* (terrified by the lingering echo of his own frenzy) has so pathetically complained? It is difficult to conceive how human nature could become callous enough to give utterance to these, and other expressions, still more inhuman, of which I shall have occasion to take notice:
but

but Mr. *Burke*, in the very pamphlet I am answering, furnishes us, according to his conception, at least, with a sufficient explanation. "Nothing can be conceived," says he, "more hard than the heart of a thorough-bred metaphysician. It comes nearer to the cold malignity of a wicked spirit, than to the frailty and passion of a man. It is like that of the principle of evil himself, incorporeal, pure, unmixed, dephlegmated, defecated evil*."

In what particular country Mr. *Burke* has met with those philosophers and metaphysicians, from whose example he has drawn this definition, I shall enquire more particularly hereafter; and on the validity of his arguments, in this respect, I may perhaps be admitted to decide with the greater impartiality, from having the misfortune (for such I believe it is, to be deficient in any branch of knowledge) of being liable to no part of that rancorous animosity, with which he is *sometimes* disposed to regard both the science and the professors of metaphysics. In the mean time, that I may not appear to prejudge the question, permit me to declare, that, if it can be shewn that these subtle disquisitions and abstract enquiries are necessarily hostile to the principles and practice of humanity, I shall hold myself in readi-

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* Letter, &c. p. 61.

ness to reject with equal abhorrence " the philosophy that would eradicate the best feelings of " the heart," and that system of private attachment and obligation, which, preferring a part to the whole, would sacrifice to *individual gratitude* the interests and happiness of mankind!

But the most powerful of those champions, for whose efforts in behalf of liberty we are indebted to the ungovernable fury of Mr. *Burke's* attacks, have not been found either among the metaphysicians, or the ferocious violators of the principles of humanity. The strong, rude, sometimes incoherent, but always gigantic mind of *Thomas Paine*, had been neither fashioned nor debauched by the subtilties nor the sophistries of metaphysics; and he has approved, at the peril of his life, the settled aversion of his soul, not only to the massacres, tumultuary or legal, which have disgraced the *French Revolution*, but even to that " penal retrospect" which rendered the faithless and perjured Louis a victim to the treacherous duplicity with which he conspired for the destruction of his people. And as for those other distinguished antagonists of Mr. *Burke*, whom this country may more exclusively challenge as her own; they are men whose social virtues have either never yet been questioned, or being questioned, have been put to the ordeal,

and

and passed, like pure gold, through the fire, undiminished either in weight or lustre.

The energy of some of the most celebrated of these has, it is true, been relaxed awhile, by the enervating influence of party attachment; while others, infected by the temporary mania of alarm, have *appeared*, at least, to desert the sacred cause: but let the tools and advocates of corruption beware; for if tyranny should advance with too audacious a stride—if those who have already provoked so much discussion, encouraged by a temporary supineness, should insult too outrageously the feelings and understandings of the nation, these champions may be provoked to resume their neglected arms; or others, still more irresistible, may step forward to supply their place. The manly spirit of Britain is not dead but sleepeth. Sampson in the lap of Dalila (*the Dalila of dependance and corruption!*) flumbers it is true, amidst his bonds: but he is not yet shorn of his strength; nor is the mystic secret yet discovered: and should he chance but to awaken from his lethargy, the *new cords* may be burst asunder, and the *Philistines* be compelled to fly!

Behold then the unwearied services of *Edmund Burke*, whom corruption has pensioned for its own destruction! who defends the privileged orders

orders by overwhelming their privileges with contemptuous ridicule! and protects the inviolability of places and pensions, by tearing asunder the venerable veil of prescription, and undermining the foundations of hereditary property!

But what reason soever the noble personages attacked in this letter may have to hurl back the charge upon their assailant, and accuse the *ministerial faction* of being "executors in their own wrong*," the friends of popular enquiry "have nothing to complain of."—"It is well! it is perfectly well! *We* have to do homage† "to" his zeal in the cause of political investigation.

The discussion provoked by his inconsiderate "Reflections" was nearly exhausted; the *nine days wonder* of the State Trials had subsided; political persecution had become familiar, and, like the daily bread of a land in plenty, was taken as matter of course, and digested without comment or observation; and whatever spirit or energy had hitherto remained among the people, seemed to have evaporated in the struggle provoked by Mr. Pitt's and Lord Grenville's bills, and to have left them, in this respect, like the fallen angels, after the toils of unsuccessful fight, reposing in the oblivious pool, equally forgetful

* Letter, &c. p. 2.

† Ibid

of the disgrace they had experienced, and of the energies by which it might be retrieved. Mr. *Burke*, however, knew that this was not the state in which it was their duty, or their interest to remain; and he determined, accordingly, to awaken them from their lethargy. He seized, therefore, again the trump of political controversy—

“ With a withering look,
 “ The war-denouncing trumpet took,
 “ And blew a blast so loud and dread,
 “ *Were ne’er prophetic sounds so full of woe!*
 “ And ever and anon he beat
 “ *The doubling drum with furious heat.**”

Such a peal, at such a time was certainly of all things most desirable. No other circumstance could, perhaps, so soon, and so effectually, have revived the energies of popular exertion, or have dissipated so effectually the lazy mists of torpor and despondency which hung on the sickening ear of British virtue, and threatened it with eternal blight: so true is it that those advantages which the ardour of friendship labours to produce in vain, are frequently conferred by the over-active zeal of our bitterest enemies.

But it will be said, if such is my exultation at the appearance of this letter, why have I called it a “mischievous pamphlet?” To this I answer, that the advantages to be expected from this letter

the peaceful security of all property, never has
 been made, I believe, since England had
 a language
 are

are consequential—certainly not intended; but that the mischief is in the thing itself. Mischief and good are merely relative terms; for nothing is exclusively productive either of the one or the other: and with respect to intellectual, or literary exertions, the balance is always eventually, I believe, favourable to the happiness of mankind. In short, it seems to be past the time, in this part of Europe at least, when it is in the power of any book to be productive of ultimate mischief. Mankind now read too many books to be permanently injured by any. Whatever mischief is to be apprehended, must be rather from the *stagnation* than the *nature* of their enquiries: and, perhaps, the best advice that can be given them, is to read every thing that comes in their way, from a Grub-street ballad to a Royal proclamation. There are, however, some publications which, abstractedly considered, and independant of those answers likely to be produced in a busy, literary, disputatious age, like the present, must be considered as most pernicious in their tendency: and such, above all that ever fell under my cognizance, is “*A Letter from the Right Honourable Edmund Burke to a Noble Lord.*”

So rash—so intemperate—so imprudent—I cannot help adding, so *unprincipled* an attack upon the peaceful security of all property, never has been made, I believe, before, since England had
a language

a language in which that attack could be conveyed. Sir *Thomas Moore*, it is true, has visited the closets of speculative men with the fascinating picture of a society in which incessant toil is not the portion of any man, and every thing is enjoyed in common: But there is nothing in the "*Eutopia*" that is irritating or inflammatory; nothing that is calculated to hurry the uncultivated mind into rash conclusions, or shake the foundations of society with sudden convulsion. *Thomas Paine*, also, in the second part of his "*Rights of Man*," projected, what *Servius Tullius* partly executed in ancient Rome, a scheme of progressive taxation, by which the towering pride of wealth might be humbled and restrained, and the burthens of government be shifted from the poor man's shoulders: And *Licinius*, and the much celebrated, and much slandered *Gracchi*, laboured hard for the establishment of those *Agrarian* laws which constituted an important article in the original compact of the Roman government, and must be regarded as among the *constitutional rights* of that nation. But for Mr. *Burke*, alone, of all the demagogues I ever read or heard of, was reserved the *honourable* distinction of assailing, with *popular fury*, the very existence of all property; stirring up the passions of a distressed and irritated people, by representing the "overgrown" fortunes of the nobility as "oppressing the industry of
" humble

“humble men *,” “trampling on the mediocrity of humble and laborious individuals †,” and the like.

In short, Mr. *Burke* is the first complete *leveller* I have met with: the only man who has had the audacity, in direct and popular language, addressed at once to the perceptions and passions of mankind at large, to represent all wealth—all territorial possession, as plunder and usurpation—as the fruit of blood, of treachery, of proscription!—as being obtained by “the murder of “innocent persons †,”—“from the aggregate “and consolidated funds of judgments *iniquitously* “*legal!*” and from “possessions *voluntarily surrendered* “by the lawful proprietors *with the gibbet at their* “*door †;*” nay, to complete the climax, as having been augmented (*as some fortunes are at this very day augmenting!*) by “bringing poverty, “wretchedness, and depopulation on the country §,” and swelled by “confiscations produced “by instigating a tyrant to injustice, to provoke “a people to rebellion §.”

I do not stand forward as the champion of prescriptive rights, nor wield the sword of reason for the perpetuity of ancient prejudices, or the vindication of hereditary honours. I am more

* Letter p. 33. † Ibid. 39. † Ibid. p. 42. § Ibid. p. 44. and p. 48.

solicitous about the living than the dead: more anxious for the happiness of posterity than the reputation of long buried ancestors. I leave therefore to the avowed advocates of the illustrious and the great, the easy task of repelling a considerable part, at least, of that outrageous obloquy which, though directed against a particular family, does in reality, more or less, bespatter the whole body of the nobility and great proprietors of the land. But, if such *were* the real foundations of property—if such were indeed the stuff of which all estate, and wealth, and grandeur were composed, what good and considerate man—what friend to the peace and order of society—to the sweet sleep of security, and the humane emotions of the heart, would have laid bare those foundations with *so rude* a stroke?

There are even some truths of the utmost importance to the improvement and happiness of society, which the true philosopher, though he will not suppress, will unfold with a tender and a trembling hand. He will proceed with a caution almost bordering on reserve; and will accompany every advance towards the requisite developement with the most solicitous exposition of every appendage and consequence of the respective parts of his doctrine; lest by pouring acceptable truths too suddenly on the popular eye, instead of salutary light he should produce blindness.

blindness and frenzy! and from premises the most just, plunge into conclusions of the most destructive nature. Such in particular are many of the speculations which relate to the subject of property. These are indeed of so delicate a nature—the abuses relating to them are so closely interwoven with the very texture of society—and the principles upon which they stand are so liable to misapprehension and abuse, that it is almost doubtful whether mankind is yet sufficiently enlightened and humanized for the investigation, and whether the subject had not been as well omitted even in the *abstract and speculative quartos of William Godwin*. For my own part, at least, conscious of the difficulty of keeping clear from all dangerous misapprehensions, I have never ventured to enter much into the subject: not but that I can see with as much clearness, and feel with as keen a sympathy, as Mr. *Burke* (when it suits the purposes of his political frenzy and personal resentments) can himself pretend, the vices, the miseries, the unsocial pride and abject wretchedness too frequently produced in society by those huge masses and immeasurable disproportions of property, which unjust laws and impolitic institutions, more than the rapacity of individuals, have tended to accumulate.

Perhaps there is no humane and reflecting man who does not, occasionally at least, wish

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that

that respectability were more attached to other things, and less to wealth; that the great body of the people were redeemed from that necessity of unremitting drudgery, penurious food, and consequent ignorance and depression of intellect, to which they are so invariably doomed; and that the huge and unwieldy masses of wealth and territory (too vast for enjoyment—too dazzling for just and prudent distribution) were in the way of being gradually and peacefully melted down, by the salutary operation of wise and equitable laws. There is perhaps, for example, no one who does not occasionally question the justice of the law of primogeniture—the great root of all the evil; and the propriety of marrying together contiguous and overgrown estates, without regard to the inclinations, dispositions, tastes, aversions, and consequent morals of the parties, who are to be the instruments, or perhaps the victims, of these schemes of family aggrandizement. In short, there are undoubtedly a thousand evils resulting from the present state of things, in this respect; and there are perhaps a thousand palliative remedies that might be applied without lacerating the social frame, or dissolving the sacred ties of reciprocal security and protection. Whatever can be done, in this or any other respect, for the emancipation of mankind, and the advancement of general happiness, it is right that we should enquire into the means of doing;

doing ; and the wider the real knowledge of those means can be disseminated, the better for the peace and happiness of the world. Every thing that relates to this subject ought, however, I repeat it, to be treated with extreme delicacy and caution ; for there are conclusions so false, and consequences so terrible, laying within a hair's breadth, as it were, of the truths we aim at, that he who rushes forward with too boisterous a precipitancy, is in danger of provoking all the horrors of tumult and assassination ; instead of ameliorating the condition of the human race. No tricks and arts of eloquence, no gusts of passion, no inflammatory declamation, nor the least incitement to personal animosity or resentment, ought to be admitted in the examination of such a question. It is a new and untried navigation. Almost all that we know about it is, that the shoals are dangerous, and the quicksands innumerable. And under such circumstances, above all, it must certainly be the duty of a cautious mariner to " heave the lead every inch of the " way he makes*." But Mr. *Burke*, who, when a few places and pensions were all the freight he had on board, thought these precautions necessary, tears from its moorings the vessel of hereditary property, and, notwithstanding " the awful state

* Letter, p. 23.

"of the time*," giving the rudder to his resentment, exposes it, at random, to all the fury of the tempest which himself has raised.

Is it possible that Mr. Burke's new patrons can countenance all this? Has the zeal of his *pensioned gratitude* transported him too far? Or is it a part of the long-digested conspiracy of political panders and rotten borough-mongers? Is no property to be sacred, but the *property of seats and votes* in the House of Commons? And are the foundations of all other inheritance to be shaken, that these usurpations may be rendered the more secure, and the authority of the *Steeles* and the *Roses*, who measure their estates by the square inch on the planks of St. Stephen's chapel, be relieved from the checks and counterpoises that may hitherto have controuled the exercise of their spurious sovereignty?

Let us hope, at least, that we are not to look for the solution of this mystery to some blacker cause. Let us hope, at least, that this insidious new-created *oligarchy* have not, on the prospect of failure in their ordinary resources, turned to the *bird's-eye prospect* of new "confiscations of the "ancient nobility of the land†," to support their all-devouring system of corruption. Let us hope, at least, that this inflammatory farago of denun-

* Letter, p. 36.

† Ibid. p. 41.

ciation and proscription—this portentous retrospect of two hundred and fifty years is not sent out, as the *avant courier* of a sanguinary faction, to prepare the way for the meditated catastrophe of other “innocent persons of illustrious rank*,” whose fate, according to Mr. *Burke*’s superstitious mode of calculation, might atone for “the butchery of the Duke of *Buckingham* †,” and the “pillage” committed upon that “body of unoffending men*,” the monks of *Tavistock* and *Wooburn Abbey* ‡.

Inflammatory pamphlets, and ferocious scurrilities in the daily prints, have however paved the way, of late, for attempts equally daring and unexpected: and the axe, which has passed over the humble weeds without inflicting a wound, may be destined to try its edge upon the stateliest oaks of the forest.

Some, perhaps, may put together the circumstances of Mr. *Burke*’s education, the pathetic lamentations which he has poured forth in a former publication§, upon the impious invasion of the sacred slumbers of the cloister, and the frequent allusions in this pamphlet to the wrongs of monks and abbots, priests and Cordeliers, Capuchins, Carmelites, Franciscans, and Dominicans||; and hence they may suppose, at least, that

* Letter, p. 42. † Ibid. p. 48. ‡ Ibid p. 68.

§ Reflections, &c. || Letter, p. 41, 42, 43, 67, 68.

they

they have discovered another reason for the intemperate zeal of *the pupil of St. Omers*. They may trace, perhaps, in this bitter and inflexible malevolence against *the inheritor of the crimes of former centuries*, the seeds of that *metaphysical piety*, so consistent with the mystical refinements of a Jesuit's college, which ascribes all the sublime attributes of the Deity to whatever is connected with the priesthood, and, of course, considers the wrongs of that sacred order, according to their own language, as neither past nor future—as existing always in the present tense—accumulated and concentrated in the **ONE ETERNAL NOW!!!**

If, however, we appeal to internal evidence, we shall find that motives of a more personal nature have not been entirely without influence in the production of this pamphlet. That unsocial vanity—that irritable self-love—that proud impatience of question or controul, which regards all opposition as insult, and “all insult as a wound* ;”—in short, that proud and revengeful egotism, which has formed so distinguishing a trait in the character of all inveterate aristocrats, from *Appius Claudius* to *Edmund Burke*, must be admitted to have had something to do, at least, with the colouring of the piece, to whatever in-

* Reflections, &c.

stigation we may attribute the sketch, or the original design. What but this could have hurried such a man into such extravagant inconsistencies? What but this, even pensioned as he is, could have rendered him so blind an instrument to the usurpations of a faction which he cannot but despise, and have driven him with such headlong violence to the destruction of every principle which he had hitherto pretended to revere?

There are, it is true, persons who have at all times regarded Mr. *Burke* as a splendid instance of the depravity of genius—as a man of base and time-serving disposition, whose patriotism was the mere purchased property of a party, which held him in dependance by the loans granted to him by the Marquis of *Rockingham*; and it was, therefore, thought consistent enough, when his patron, by a last act of liberality, had cancelled all legal obligation, that he should set himself to sale to the opposite party, and become the furious opponent of every principle he had been hired to defend. I have endeavoured, however, to judge him with greater charity. I have sought for, and thought I had discovered, a principle that would account for his conduct in a less dishonourable way. My solution, it is true, would still have left him among the number of those deluded men whose judgments have been perverted

verted by a mistaken sense of private obligation ; but it would not have reduced him to the level of *fordid corruption*.

In short, I conceived Mr. *Burke* to have been throughout a Republican of the old Roman school ! or, in other words, a high-toned aristocrat. And I readily accounted for this twist in his understanding from the patronage which it had been his misfortune to experience. For it is but too natural with us to regard those institutions as every thing, without which we should ourselves, apparently, have been nothing. It was, therefore, not extraordinary that Mr. *Burke*, finding himself redeemed, by the powerful and generous patronage of the leader of an aristocratic party, from the necessity of being a *public lecturer* in a provincial university, and transplanted to the more genial soil of political influence, should think himself bound in *gratitude* to exalt that aristocracy to which alone he owed his exaltation.

Upon this solution, his conduct, apparently so opposite, with respect to the *American* and *French* revolutions, is perfectly reconcileable. For with pure, genuine, whole-length aristocrats, princes and people are alike indifferent: alike obnoxious, when they aspire to any share of power; and alike acceptable, as the tools and instruments of their ambition. But as, in all mixed governments, their

their power is of a very doubtful and amphibious nature, but little recognized by the avowed maxims and spirit of the constitution, and depending rather upon the influence of their property, and their talent for intrigue, than either the weight of their functions, or real attachment of the people,) as circumstances vary, they are obliged to vary the fashion of their sentiments and conduct. Their principle, and their object, is, however, always the same; and always has been so, whether they instigated the people to destroy a *Tarquin*, or created a *Tarquin* to destroy the people*. Law and liberty are alternately in their mouths; but their liberty is the unrestrained licence of monopolizing oppression, and their law the arbitrary exercise of their own discretion. The dignity of the sovereign, and the sovereignty of the people, are alternate stalking horses for their usurpations. As Mr. *Burke* expresses it—"Popularity and power they regard alike. These are with them only different means to obtain their object; and have no preference over each other in their minds, but as one or the other may afford a surer or less certain prospect of arriving at their end †."

* The reader is particularly recommended to peruse with attention the account given by *Dionysius of Halicarnassus* (B. IV.) of the murder of *Servius Tullius*, and of the expulsion of the *Tarquins*.

† Letter, p. 15.

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Such

Such are the characteristics of inveterate aristocracy—of the high-toned *optimates* of mixed and limited governments: a set of men widely different from the ancient Tories of this country:—more dangerous, I believe, to the peace and happiness of society; certainly more destitute of all support from rational and consistent principle. Such is the party to which the first talents, the most capacious understandings, perhaps the best hearts in this nation, have been too long enslaved! Such is the party to which I imagined Mr. *Burke* to be inseparably wedded.

This supposition is countenanced by his whole political history. This supposition is confirmed by his own account of what he calls his public services; that is to say, his services to this party. And, upon this supposition, his conduct with respect to the French revolution, is perfectly reconcilable to his conduct respecting America.

The principle of the two revolutions was, perhaps, the same: though this may be contested, at least, upon very plausible grounds. Their operation in this country was, however, widely different. Party disputes ran high, it is true, on both occasions; and the nation was unhappily divided into the most inveterate factions. But in the former instance, it was the gentry, the optimacy, the aristocratic interest, that moved—that agitated, and conducted every thing; in the latter,

latter, the great body of the people—the *common mass*, had the audacity to judge for themselves, and inquire into the nature of their rights.

Could an inveterate aristocrat be expected to tolerate this? Was it not to be expected, that persons of this description, (like the aristocracy of Spain, upon a similar occasion) should cling to the throne for protection, against what they regarded as the *invasions of Liberty*, and permit themselves to be degraded and enslaved, rather than suffer the people to be free?

Thus did the candid and liberal part of mankind account for the apparent inconsistencies of Mr. *Burke*; and, by referring his whole conduct to the influence of aristocratic prejudices, exonerate him from the charge of venal apostacy. But what shall we say now? What opinion shall we form of the present work? To what principle shall we refer the incongruous sentiments it contains? Certainly not to that abhorrence of uncontrolled prerogative which inspired him with the enthusiasm of opposition during the American war, and made rebellion for liberty lovely in his eyes; these sentiments were relinquished, for the reasons above stated, at the very dawn of the French revolution. Certainly, not to those feelings which, during the discussion of the *regency bill*, occasioned that exulting, indecent, and unfeeling exclamation—"The Almighty has hurled

"him from his throne!"—Mr. *Burke* has learned a very different "style to a gracious benefactor*!" His Majesty is now "a benevolent prince," who "shews an eminent example, in promoting the "commerce, manufactures, and agriculture of "his kingdom;" and "who even in his amusements is a patriot, and in his hours of leisure an "improver of his native soil†?"—a position, the truth of which no one will call in question. But is it more true at this time than before the above-mentioned period? I, for my part, can perceive no alteration. The benevolence and patriotism of the present reign has been steady, uniform, and consistent. At least, the only important difference is, that Mr. *Burke* has now a *pension* from his "mild and benevolent sovereign;" and that then he expected a *place* from his successor! Still less can we refer this extraordinary pamphlet to those aristocratical principles which offered the only solution of his former conduct.

"The government of France," says that great oracle, Sir *John Mitford*‡, "was totally overthrown in consequence of the total failure of "the good opinion of the people;" and hence that profound and subtile logician thought himself entitled to infer, that it must necessarily be high treason to make the foundations of popular

* Letter, &c. p. 10. † Ibid. p. 44. ‡ Trial of T. Hardy.

opinion: but if this conclusion were just, never was so capital a treason committed against the aristocratic branch of the constitution, as by the publication of Mr. *Burke's* pamphlet.

Is the composition of aristocracy such as Mr. *Burke* represents it?—Then is the very institution of aristocracy radically vicious!—Is it “the offal thrown to jackals in waiting,” after “the lion has sucked the blood*?” and are “innocent persons†,” and “bodies of unoffending men‡” the “prey” upon which both are pampered?—I am afraid these premises would carry us further than Mr. *Burke* and his new friends are yet prepared to go. I am afraid it would be something like high treason, at least, under Lord *Grenville's* new act, to draw the conclusions that inevitably result from such data!!! And yet if such pamphlets are put in circulation by the *advocates* and *pensioners* of government, what act of parliament can prevent the consequences?

Mr. *Burke*, an advocate of government! Mr. *Burke*, the champion of aristocracy! Mr. *Burke*, the political Atlas who supports with such “great zeal,” and such “success,”—“those old prejudices which buoy up the ponderous mass of nobility, wealth, and titles‡!” Judge for yourselves, my fellow citizens: but before you

* Letter, &c. p. 41. † Ibid. p. 42. ‡ Ibid. &c. p. 34.

pronounce, too positively, read with attention his eighty pages of virulent abuse against "overgrown dukes, who oppress the industry of humble men*!"—"who hold large portions of wealth" ("the prodigies of profuse donation†") "without any apparent merit of their own‡!" and by their "vast landed pensions§" (obtained by the blackest crimes of treachery and oppression||) "so enormous as not only to outrage economy, but even to stagger credibility¶,"—"trample on the mediocrity of laborious individuals**!"

But it is not only with the battle-axe of moral indignation that Mr. *Burke* assails the aristocracy of his country. With equal expertness, and equal ardour, he wings the light, keen shafts of satire and ridicule: nay, so blunt is his sympathy, and so exquisite his animosity, that he even tears it occasionally with the rude hand-saw of pointless scurrility††. The rage of *Juvenil*, and the playful levity of *Horace*, are not sufficient; and Billingsgate and the shambles are forced into alliance with the muses, the classics, and the sciences, to supply him with terms and metaphors sufficiently forcible to express the mighty hatred with which he labours.

* Letter, &c. p. 33.

† Ibid. p. 39.

‡ Ibid. p. 34.

§ Ibid. p. 38.

|| Ibid. p. 41, 42, 43, 44, and 46.

¶ Ibid.

p. 37.

** Ibid. p. 39.

†† Ibid. p. 37, 68, 69.

Youthful intemperance may furnish some apology for hasty and indecorous language: but if grey hairs expect our reverence, they must purchase it by discretion, wisdom, and moderation. Mr. *Burke*, however, retains, at three-score, his juvenile contempt for these cold qualities—"this well selected rigour!"—this "preventive police of morality*!" The hungry lioness rushes not with so blind a fury upon her prey, as he upon the victims of his resentment. I am told that a noble attendant of the bedchamber (I mean Lord *Winchelsea*) who turned several of his tenants out of their farms, &c. for being guilty of distant relationship to me, and of having read my publications, among other things, complained very bitterly of some passages in my "Peripatetic," which he considered as calculated to inflame the minds of the common people against the opulent and the great. I will not venture to affirm that there are no expressions or sentiments, in that hasty publication, which, upon mature consideration, might demand some softening or apology. But to say nothing of the much more popular and "questionable shape" in which Mr. *Burke's* pamphlet comes before the public, I defy all the lords of the bedchamber

* Letter, &c. p. 34.

put together, to find in the work before-mentioned, or in any other of my productions, passages of any thing like the inflammatory nature ~~with~~ those in which the "Letter to a Noble Lord" abounds. I have pleaded, it is true, and, while I have a tongue or a pen to exercise in so just a cause, I will continue to plead, the cause of the oppressed and injured labourer. I have reproved the unfeeling and fastidious pride of greatness; and offered something in extenuation for the pilfering vices of laborious wretchedness. I have even presumed to hurl back the charge of dishonesty upon "mighty lords, and descendants from the "loose amours of kings," who "rob us, by letters "patent, and suffer not a coal to blaze in our "grates, nor an action to be brought for the "recovery of a just debt, till they have levied "contribution upon us:" But Mr. *Burke* flies at higher quarry. He pounces at once at hereditary property; calls the birds of prey around him, and excites them to the promised banquet.

In short, if the dæmon of anarchy wished to reduce the social frame to chaos, what charms more proper could he select for his incantations than the ingredients of this troubled cauldron? Should some prophet of pillage and massacre in reality arise, what more could he wish for than such a *Koran*? what further instructions could he
give

give to his apostles and missionaries than to comment upon the text of *Edmund Burke*, and push his principles to their most obvious conclusions?

I trust, however—and, in this one respect, my opportunities of forming a just conclusion have been much superior to my antagonist's—I trust, that what are called the common people of this country are in no danger of being stimulated to such excesses as this letter sometimes pretends to deprecate, but more frequently appears calculated to provoke. I too have laboured “with very great zeal, and I believe with some degree of success*” (rather more, if I am not mistaken, than *Mr. Burke* can boast of in his attempt to “support old prejudices*”) not indeed “to discountenance enquiry*” but to give it a just direction;—to point out to the poorer sort in particular of my fellow citizens, smarting and writhing under the lash of oppression and contumely, the peaceful means of redress; to shew them the distinction between tumult and reform—between the amelioration and the dissolution of society—the removal of oppression, and the sanguinary pursuits of pillage and revenge. I trust that the salutary lesson has not been enforced in vain—that *whatever calamities may result to society, from the present enormous inequality in the*

* Letter, &c. p. 34.

distribution of property, all tumultuary attacks upon individual possession, all attempts, or pretences of leveling and equalization, must be attended with massacres and assassinations, equally destructive to the security of every order of mankind; and, after a long struggle of afflictions and horrors, must terminate at last, not in equalization, but in a most iniquitous transfer, by which cut-throats and assassins would be enabled to found a new order of nobility, more insufferable, because more ignorant and ferocious, than those whom their daggers had supplanted.

The friends of liberty know that, sooner or later, the progress of reason must produce (perhaps, at no distant period) an essential reformation in the government and institutions of this country: but (unless the frantic and desperate councils of such men as Mr. *Burke* and Mr. *Windham*, should unhinge all society, under pretence of preserving order) no part of the excesses which have rent and convulsed the devoted land of *France* need be dreaded in *England*: for the causes of those excesses do not exist among us. Reform, like a long-woo'd virgin, shall come at last, in the unfullied robes of Peace, and, in the Temple of Concord, shall give her hand to Reason. But such hymeneals suit not the tastes and dispositions of Mr. *Burke*; for placemen and pensioners will not be invited to the banquet. The marriage of Tyranny and Corruption, in a robe of blood,

blood, would be more in harmony with his disordered and irritated imagination; with a legion of foreign mercenaries to protect the pomp, and a procession of Inquisitors, and an *Auto da Fé*, to close the accustomed revels!

Such, at least, are the only orgies, for which the vows and the offerings of Mr. *Burke* are calculated to prepare. Such alone are the systems to which his maxims and sentiments are reconcilable: For if, on one hand, all democratic innovation—all reform is to be pertinaciously resisted, and on the other, all respect for rank, fortune, and hereditary station are to be torn away, by the impassioned hand of personal rancour and factious malevolence—if the people, deprived of all legal weight and influence in the legislature of the country, and therefore of all attachment from rational and well-placed affection, are to be stimulated to personal hatred and animosity against the noble, the wealthy, and the great, whom they are to be taught by *ministerial hirelings* (oh! that such a mind should ever be included in such a description!) to regard as the plunderers of their ancestors, and the oppressors of themselves, what but tyranny the most unqualified—what but blood—what but foreign mercenaries, and the united horrors of inquisitorial and military despotism, can long sustain that rule which ministers pretend to be so anxious to preserve unaltered?

What *but* this?—Nay: *not this, nor more!!!*—Britons may be led: but driven they will not be. They have spirit—they have intelligence—they have a manly firmness—they have some knowledge of their rights, and a keen desire to possess them. In short, they are men who live towards the close of the eighteenth century, and have seen two Revolutions: and if Bishops continue to preach, that “they have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them;” and Lord Chancellors to declare, that “the laws they are to obey ought to be couched in such terms that they cannot comprehend them!”—If wasteful wars are to create famines, and illustrious peers are to console the half-starved people with the reflection, that “their scanty mess would have been still more scanty, if so many of their friends and relatives had not been slaughtered;” or, as Mr. *Windham* would call it, *killed off*, “in foreign expeditions!”—If every door is to be closed against peaceful remonstrance and complaint, and Secretaries at War are to thrust obnoxious statutes down our throats with the sabres of armed associators!—and if, finally, every gallant patriot, noble or simple, who has the generosity to stem the torrent of corruption, is to be beset by treasury blood hounds, and hunted with threats of confiscation and proscription:

tion: by the great terror that swells my heart, as imagination conjures up the picture, I do not believe that earth or hell have power to sustain the system; but that which *France* has been, *Britain* too soon must be!

If such events should take place, whom has the country to thank but the *Grenvilles*, the *Westmorelands*—the *Pitts*, and *Windhams*?—If property should be shaken, and nobility go to wreck, who sounds the Indian yell of pillage and desolation, but the Right Honourable *Edmund Burke*, with his “Letter to a noble Lord?”

In vain shall the advocates of this political maniac accuse me of misrepresenting his arguments, by generalizing observations which he has confined to a particular instance. I do no more than every reader of his pamphlet must inevitably do. It is the Duke of *Bedford*, indeed, that is ostensibly attacked; but the whole body of nobility and landed proprietors, are wounded through his side. Let not the partizans of the minister weakly and wickedly suppose, “the rival honours of the house of *Russel* are blighted by this pamphlet, and public odium excited against their wide possessions; but we have yet—

Golden opinions from all ranks of men,
“Which may be worn still in their newest glofs.”

SHAKESPEARE.

Let

Let them not, I say, "lay this flattering
 "unction to their souls." There is not one argu-
 ment of moral reprehension—one stroke of satire,
 or ridicule—one intemperate expression of de-
 gradation or abuse, that does not equally apply
 to them all. Old nobility and new, all are in-
 cluded—all are alike the victims of Mr. *Burke's*
 irritated pride and immeasurable resentments.
 Their patents, their deeds of gift, their titles,
 and their rent-rolls, all—all are consumed to-
 gether in this conflagration of his inflamed and all-
 inflaming mind!

If the estates of the Duke of *Bedford* deserve
 the odious appellation of "landed pensions*,"
 are not the estates of the Dukes of *Portland*, of
Rutland, of *Richmond*, of the Earls of *Westmore-*
land, *Winchelsea*, *Lonsdale*, and the long train of
et ceteras, "landed pensions" also? Is the Duke
 of *Bedford* a "Leviathan among the creatures
 "of the crown, who plays and frolics in the
 "ocean of royal bounty," (by which, I suppose,
 we are to understand that the king, whenever
 his virtuous and disinterested ministers shall so
 advise, may withdraw his bounty†, and transfer
 these "landed pensions," to more grateful ser-
 vants!) is not the Earl *Fitzwilliam* a "Leviathan"
 also? and, would not all the disgusting details

* Letter, &c. p. 38. † If this is not the meaning of
 this language, what does it mean?

of this figure, in which Mr. *Burke* indulges his imagination, equally apply in one instance as in the other? Does he not, also, "lay floating "many a rood *?" And if the "overgrown" bulk of the one "oppresses the industry of humble "men †," are not the unwieldy proportions of the other equally oppressive? Was Mr. *Russel*, in the time of *Henry* the eighth, a "Jackall in waiting ‡?" What are the *Hawkesburies*, the *Loughboroughs*, the *Macdonalds*, and the long list of new-created peers, whose wholesale elevation has tended, not a little, to shake the prescriptive reverence, or in Mr. *Burke's* own words, "those "old prejudices §," which can alone support a house of *hereditary legislators*? If it is a disgrace to the Duke of *Bedford* to have been "swaddled and rocked, and dandled into a "legislator ||," have not the whole body of nobility, by descent, become legislators in the same ridiculous manner?—If I were not afraid of being suspected of courting the favour of party, (than which nothing, I believe, is more destructive to the energies of genuine patriotism) or bowing to the splendour of wealth and patronage (than which nothing is more degrading to the free-born mind!) it would be only a tribute of justice, to the value and ability of late

* Letter, &c. p. 37.

† Ibid, p. 33.

‡ Ibid, p. 41.

§ Ibid, p. 34.

|| Ibid, p. 28.

exertions to say, that it would be well for the country, and for the honour of that house, of which the Duke of Bedford has rendered himself a distinguished ornament—if this legislative *swaddling*, and *rocking*, and *dandling*, had been uniformly as efficient to the end proposed. On the contrary, how many of our illustrious nobles (aye, and of those whom Mr. Burke must now rank among the number of his friends!) are no better, to this day, than “mewling in a nurse’s arms;” or, what is worse, with a criminal supineness, equally dishonourable to their rank and to their nature, are abandoning every thing to the spoil and usurpations of a set of jobbers, loan contractors, Change-alley calculators and adventurers, who have no other claim to the implicit confidence they enjoy, than what is derived from the disgrace and misery, the ruin, desolation and famine, which their mad projects, and desperate speculations have brought upon the country—and, indeed, upon the whole of Europe?

But this is not the only instance in which the flail of Mr. Burke strikes harder behind than it does before. I do not trouble myself to enquire whether this first leaf of “*Burke’s new Peerage*,” afford a specimen of accuracy and impartiality, or of misrepresentation and malevolence. The question with me (and the only question of real importance to society) is, not how property was acquired

acquired three hundred years ago? but—how it is now employed? If the Duke of *Bedford* is disposed, as I hope and trust he is, to employ his great property and influence to the protection of the liberties and happiness of his country, the people will have an interest in the protection of that property. If there be others who are disposed to abuse their advantages, to the slavery and destruction of mankind, let them beware, lest they urge the people to do that in *self-defence*, which, from principle, they would abhor: for it is not very strange that grinding oppression should sometimes force the harassed multitude to reflect, that the rights and happiness of millions are of more importance than the security and possessions of a few. The alternative, it is true, is dreadful: but the crime is with those who compel a nation to choose between such hideous extremes.

Regarding property in this point of view, I enquire not how “the first Earl of *Bedford*” acquired the vast estates which he has transmitted to his posterity; nor by what title *John a Gaunt* held those immense *commons*, which he bequeathed *in perpetuum* to the poor of the respective districts. I would not even be very curious to enquire into the means by which the wretched peasantry have been deprived of these freeholds, and their estates transferred to a few

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wealthy

wealthy proprietors; unless it were with a view of preventing future encroachments. But, surely, Mr. *Burke* does not suppose us ignorant enough to believe, that Mr. *Russel* ^{was} the only founder of a family, whose merits it would be painful to probe. Does he call us to look back to the reign of *Henry* the eighth?—who, by the way, tyrant and monster as he was, (and even Mr. *Burke*, it seems, is aware that kings can sometimes be such) by exterminating from the country those lazy and pestiferous drones, the monks and religionists “of his time and country,” made ^{some} ~~an ample~~ atonement to society for all his crimes!—Does Mr. *Burke*, I say, call upon us to look back to the reign of this eighth *Harry*? Let this “defender of the high and eminent†” reflect, that we can look further! or we need not look so far! Let him ask the house of *Bentinck*, whether there were no “prodigies of” profuse donation” in the time of *William* the third? Whether the “lions” of the house of *Nassau* had not their “jackalls,” as well as those of the house of *Tudor*? Let him ask the proudest he that ever traced his genealogy to the times of the Norman robber, whether there were no instances, even in *those good old days*, of “immoderate grants taken from the recent confiscation

* Letter, &c. p. 43. † Ibid. p. 42.

"of the ancient nobility of the land?" Had none of the landed pensions of that day their "fund in the murder of innocent persons, or in the pillage of bodies of men†," more truly "unoffending" than those cloistered drones and juggling visionaries, whose dispersion Mr. Burke so pathetically bewails? Could the monks of *Wooburn* and *Tavistock*, and the murdered franklins and freeholders of those days of old, rise at once from their graves, (like the furies who pursued *Orestes*) to harass the present possessors of their respective seats, whose wrongs would sound most terrible in the affrighted ears of nobility?—whose appeal would be most forcible to retributive justice?

Mr. Burke has done an irreparable injury to the cause of aristocracy by provoking this discussion; and, if an antidote is not applied, which I trust it will, by fair and manly exposition of the subject, has set a poison in circulation most dangerous to the health and existence of the social frame.

The attachment, however, of this polemic to aristocracy, appears at least to be as sincere as his religion. He pretends to foster and protect the former, and he tears it up by the roots, from that only soil in which any institution can flourish—the opinions of the people over whom it spreads.

* Letter, &c. p. 41. † Ibid. 42.

He pretends to be a zealot in behalf of the latter, and he acts on the direct converse of the position upon which the morality of that system is professedly built. The decalogue only denounces vengeance upon the posterity of offenders to the *third and fourth generations*; but promises mercy to thousands of the righteous and good. Mr. *Burke*, on the contrary, visits the sins of the forefathers upon generations without end, and passes by their virtues, as of no account at all.

I repeat it—for I am no simulator; nor have the popular schools in which I have been fashioned, (whatever contempt Mr. *Burke* may now think fit to entertain for them) made me so keen a disputant, as to be willing, for the sake of victory, to appear the thing I am not. I repeat it, therefore, I do not stand up as the advocate of hereditary distinctions, or hereditary honours. All honour, and all shame, are, in my calculation, merely personal. Goods and chattels may be heritable property; and in such a society as we are members of, I am convinced that it is necessary they should be so. But moral and intellectual distinctions, (the fountains of all real honour) are neither heritable nor transferable; nor is it in the power of human laws to make them such. They begin and they end with the immediate possessor. I admit, at the same time, that ancestral reputation sometimes operates very powerfully in the

way

way of example. Strong instances of this are to be found both in the history of the ancient and the modern world: and if the Duke of Bedford has been roused to his late exertions by a proud admiration of the conduct of that ancestor who, in the infamous reign of Charles the second, sealed his attachment to the principles of liberty with his blood, I rejoice that he had such an example to set before his eyes; nor is it justice to society to suffer that example to be forgotten. If his Grace, in defiance of Mr. *Burke's* admonition*, should ever condescend to attend my lecture; (where I have sometimes been honoured with the plaudits of as fine scholars, as distinguished patriots, and almost as exalted geniuses as my calumniating antagonist) I would endeavour, it is true, to convince him that there is a surer and a better motive of virtuous action: that the love of mankind is better than the pride of ancestry: that it is more noble to enquire how nations and generations can be most effectually served, than what our forefathers did, or what they would have done: and that to be what we ought, is to be something more than the most virtuous ancestor has ever been! But if mankind are still to be estimated, not by individuals, but by families — if the whole race is to be regarded as a body corporate, and the living representative to be account-

* Letter, &c. p. 35.

able for the actions of the whole, still let us pay some little regard to justice—let us balance fairly the debtor and the creditor, and set down the good as well as the bad.

If this is the way in which we are to proceed, the house of *Russel* has nothing to dread in the settlement of the long account. Let Mr. *Burke* paint the first Earl of *Bedford* in the blackest colours his imagination can supply—let all that he has asserted pass unquestioned, and more, if more can be found, be added to the account; the virtuous resolution of Lord *William Russel*, who, in the full possession of all that youth, and rank, and wealth, paternal pride, and conjugal affection could bestow, disdained to preserve his life by shrinking from his principles, is an ample atonement for all.

But it is not strange that Mr. *Burke* should be blind, not only to justice, but to the interests also of the order he professes to defend; for what so blind as the headlong fury of selfish and irritable pride? What so precipitate as the passions and resentments of a mind evidently and avowedly uncontrouled by any curb of principle?—which, regardless of the unity and immutability of truth, professes to submit its calculations and conclusions to the fluctuating decisions of interest, favour, or aversion—and on questions that relate to “the theory [and practice] of moral proportions*,”

and

* Letter, &c. p. 9.

to use "one style to a gracious benefactor; another to a proud and insulting foe*?"

That such were the motives and causes that produced this pamphlet, the pamphlet itself has put beyond all question and dispute. "Why will his Grace," it is said, "by attacking me, force me reluctantly to compare my little merit with that which obtained from the crown those prodigies of profuse donation,†" &c. "Let him remit his rigor on the disproportion between merit and reward in others, and they will make no enquiry into the origin of his fortune‡!"

Was ever rectitude of mind more publicly disavowed than in this sentence? Was ever self-love and resentment so openly proclaimed paramount to all principle? Either the enquiry is right, and ought to require no inducement from personal motives; or it is wrong, and no personal motive ought to provoke it. But this, I suppose, is the *gratitude* about which Mr. *Burke* makes so much parade:—"You do injustice to mankind, that I may reap the benefit of it; and I will do the like injustice, that the benefit may be reaped by you!"

Such is the *common traffic of gratitude and private obligation*! Such, according to "the old sect," in politics and morals, is the square rule of virtue!

* Letter, &c. p. 10. † Ibid. p. 39. ‡ Ibid. p. 47.

This sentiment is still more nakedly expressed in another place. "*Had he permitted me to remain in quiet, I should have said 'tis his estate; that's enough. It is his by law; what have I to do with its history? He would naturally have said on his side, 'tis this man's fortune.—He is as good now, as my ancestor was two hundred and fifty years ago. I am a young man with very old pensions; he is an old man with very young pensions,—that's all*!*"

What is this but saying, in other words, that men of estate and property, and the nobles of the land in particular—the *hereditary guardians of the rights and properties of the people*, are bound in good policy to countenance all the growing speculations of corruption; and, if they refuse to do so, that the *new speculators* will turn round upon the *old proprietors* with all the fury of a dangerous and desperate revenge, shake the foundations of their property, and endeavour to excite against them all the popular odium that may lead to pillage and tumult! But if these passages reveal the *selfish irritability* and *lax morality* of the writer, what shall we say to the sentiment exposed in the ensuing?—"Since the total body of my services have obtained the acceptance of my sovereign, it would be absurd in me to range

* Letter, &c. p. 39.

" myself on the side of the Duke of Bedford and
 " the *London Corresponding Society**!"

What, then—are we to understand that if *the total body of his services* had not been accepted, that is to say, rewarded by the *animating soul of a good pension*, he would have ranged himself on the side of the Duke of Bedford and the London Corresponding Society?—In other words, are we to understand that his hostility to liberty, and the negotiation for his pension, began at the same time?

For the honour of human genius, I would fain hope, in defiance of so many concurring circumstances, and of Mr. *Burke's* own testimony, that this is not entirely a correct statement of the case, and that it is yet possible to find some way of accounting for his conduct, without referring every thing to conscious and voluntary corruption. Be this, however, as it may—I trust that the public are not at any loss to decide which of the important services, so ostentatiously displayed in this splendid farrago of abuse and egotism, it was that occasioned that "*able, vigorous, and well-formed statesman*†, Lord Grenville, to have the "*goodness and condescension*" both "*to say*" and do such "*handsome things* in his behalf‡." I will not enter into the personal merits or de-

* Letter, &c. p. 59.

† Ibid. p. 3.

‡ Ibid. p. 2.

merits of Mr. *Burke*, nor into the general question of the propriety or impropriety of his pension, I leave this enquiry in the hands of older and of better judges. Mr. *Burke* would, of course, object to my "being on the inquest of his *quantum meruit**"—(may his fate never be in the hand of a less candid juror!) He, of course, "cannot recognize in my few" (he cannot, however, add my "*idle*) years, the competence to judge "of his long and laborious life*;" and I am certainly as well attached, as he, at this time, finds it convenient to be, "not only to the letter, but "to the spirit of the old English law of trial by "peers†;" and should be sorry either to prejudge him by a *garbelled and inflammatory report*, fabricated in the guilt-concealing cave of *secrecy*, to present him with a packed jury, or to traverse his challenges. But Mr. *Burke* will not himself deny that from "the total body of his services," it is easy to single forth the limb or feature whose grace and attraction won the rich prize of royal—or rather of ministerial favour. Mr. *Burke* himself will not pretend to doubt that, great and important as those services might be, which he has so well enumerated, his "unexampled toil in the service "of his country‡," his "œconomical reforms§," his "studies of political œconomy," which he had

* Letter, &c. p. 9. † Ibid. p. 8. ‡ Ibid. p. 6.

§ Ibid. p. 18.

pursued "from his very early youth," and by which "the house" [of commons] "has profitted" so much, "for above eight and twenty years*," together with all that "preparation and discipline" "to political warfare," by which he "had earned" his pension before he set his foot in Saint Stephen's chapel†, "all, all would have been neglected and forgotten, but for his conduct with respect to the French Revolution. All that he "did, and all that he prevented from being "done‡," even at that time (1780), when "wild" "and savage insurrection quitted the woods, and "prowled about the streets in the name of reform§," and "a sort of national convention" (of which his new friend Mr. Pitt now, perhaps, recollects that he was a member) "nosing parliament" "in the very seat of its authority||," threatened England "with the honour of leading up the" "death-dance of democratic revolution!¶" all, all would have lain in thankless oblivion—even the *eternal impeachment*, "on which (of all his services) he values himself the most**," would have failed to influence "ministers to consider" "his situation††," if it had not been for the zeal and ardour with which he sounded the trumpet of alarm against the *ideal danger* of

* Letter, &c. p. 28. † Ibid. p. 27. ‡ Ibid. p. 23.

§ Ibid. p. 13. || Ibid. p. 14. ¶ Ibid. p. 13. ** Ibid. p. 27.

†† Ibid. p. 6.

"rude inroads of *Gallic tumult* *," called up, with his hideous yells, the hell-born fiend of political persecution, and, turning the house of commons into a mountebank's stage, dagger-struck every imagination, and plunged his country—plunged all Europe, into the most frantic, the most terrible, the most defolating war, that ever scourged the universe!

This was the crown of all his labours—"the Corinthian capital," that gave the finishing grace to the temple of public utility his life had been spent in rearing. But for this "the four and a half per cents had been kept full in his eye †" "in vain. He might have enjoyed, it is true, in vista, the prospect of this trophy of "the œconomy of selection and proportion ‡," but never would he have beheld the minister entering the porch to consecrate the spoils and offerings at his shrine,

If I were not impatient to enter into more important matter, and unwilling to extend too far the limits of this pamphlet, I would fain make some few animadversions upon these four and a half per cents. I would fain enquire into the grounds of that exultation with which Mr. *Burke* compares the funds and sources of his pension, with those that administered to the exaltation of the house of Ruffel. I would fain enquire whether

* Letter, &c. p. 54. † Ibid. p. 25. ‡ Ibid. 33.

it be more vicious to enrich oneself with the plunder of *dormitories*, and by the extermination of slothful, juggling, monks (who, like devouring *locusts*, prey on the green leaf of useful industry, and blight its hopeful fruitage in the bud) or even with the confiscations of attainted nobles, the descendants, according to Mr. *Burke*, of former "jackalls in waiting"—for the argument holds equally true *ad infinitum*; or to draw the means of luxury and profusion from taxes extorted from the hard-earned pittance of the labourer, and thereby to make the spare meal of poverty still more scanty and comfortless. Mr. *Burke* has quibbles and sophistries, and his friend, Mr. *Windham*, has metaphysical subtilities, I make no doubt, to repel this charge; but if I had time to push the question home, I could prove, by calculations as incontrovertible as any in the minister's arithmetic, that every pension that rewards the baseness of political apostacy, strips the wretched family of the peasant and the manufacturer of a portion of their scanty bread.

Mr. *Burke* may therefore congratulate himself, as much as he pleases, upon the "spontaneous" "bounty" of "the Royal Donor," and "the" "goodness and condescension" of "his ministers*," but his pension is, in reality, a beggar's

* Letter, &c. p. 6 and 2.

cap, thrown by the way side, to receive the farthing of the poorest passenger; while, to aggravate the disgrace, taxation, like the crippled soldier in *Gil Blas*, rests its blunderbuss upon the file, and converts the pretended "charity*" into an act of plunder.

But my pamphlet is swelling beyond its intended proportion; and I must hasten to more important matter. I leave, therefore, all consideration of the general merits of the pensioner, all comparison of the proportion between the services and the reward; and all enquiry into the operation of the pension, that I may examine the particular conduct without which all his other services would have been of no avail; and canvas the principles upon which that conduct was professedly built.

"If I am unworthy," says the pamphlet, "the ministers are worse than prodigal†:" and if with respect to *French affairs* his conduct has been inconsistent with justice, policy, and the security and happiness of mankind, the greater his former services, the more criminal those ministers must appear: for the system indeed must be rotten to the core, when a life of honourable service can only obtain its reward by an old age of depredation and mischief.

* Letter, &c. p. 33.

† Ibid. p. 7.

Mr. *Burke*, it is true, modestly declines "the high distinction," and "the glory" of being considered as the exclusive "author of the war*," and as I am not at all desirous of removing responsibility from the shoulders where the constitution has placed it, I am ready to exonerate him from the charge. I believe that the ministers of this country had resolved, from the first dawn of the *Revolution in France*, to seize the earliest opportunity of attacking that nation. I believe, that but for the ministers of this country, the profligate and fatal treaty of *Pilnitz* never would have been signed; *France* and the Empire would not have been embroiled in war; the excesses which have disgraced the greatest and most glorious event in the annals of mankind, would never have been perpetrated; and that *Louis XVI.* might, perhaps, to this day have continued "King of the French." I believe, also, that if no such man as Mr. *Burke* had been in existence, Mr. *Pitt*—or more properly speaking, Lord *Hawkesbury*, would nevertheless have plunged us into this unhappy contest. Mr. *Burke* and his *dagger* were therefore only instruments (powerful instruments, however,) in exciting that terror and alarm, which gave, among certain classes at least, a degree of popularity to the measure, without which the minister would

* Letter, &c. p. 79.

have

have found it difficult to fulfil his continental engagements. It was Mr. Burke who assisted him, in this embarrassment, by sounding the tocsin of alarm, and creating a real danger by proclaiming one that was imaginary. It was Mr. Burke who made himself cryer to the new inquisition, and prepared the way for the *Reeveses*, the *Devayneses*, and the *Idefons*, whose departmental *Star Chambers*, and *Revolutionary Committees**, have polluted the stream of administrative justice, and debased the character of the nation. He it was that, like a political dog-star, took "from his horrid hair" distemper and delirium; till the brain-fever of property maddened the whole land; and great bankers and wealthy merchants, surrounded by their clerks and dependants, (the myrmidons of the ware-room and counting-house) turned

* This phrase may sound rather harshly in the ears of *loyal associators*! but it should be remembered, that there are revolutions against liberty, as well as revolutions for it: revolutions made by governors against the people, as well as revolutions made by the people against the government. The latter of these have always, I believe, proceeded from necessity; been actuated, in the first instance, by right principles; and been productive of ultimate good. The former have as uniformly resulted from the ambition, rapacity, and tyranny of wicked counsellors, and have been productive of oppression and misery, and generally of *ultimate revolt*! These revolutions are, in reality, the causes, and the justifications of the other.—But of this more in the text.

Merchant

Merchant Taylor's Hall into a bear garden; put Billingsgate and Bedlam to the blush by their disgraceful, and outrageous conduct; and thus presented us with a modern illustration of that profound and indubitable remark of *Machiavel*, that "tumults and disturbances are more frequently created by the wealthy and powerful, than by the poorer classes of society." In

* See that invaluable work "Discourses on the first decade of Titus Livius." Versions of this neglected book, both in *French* and in *English*, are to be met with upon almost every stall: and my readers cannot do better than transplant it, and, indeed, the whole of this author's works, into their libraries. The doctrine above quoted, will be found at some length in book i. c. 5.

Some, perhaps, may think that I have treated this "respectable body of men!" rather too harshly in this passage: but the turbulent yells, the grinning distortions of impassioned countenance, the jostlings, and personal violence, with which every individual was assailed who attempted to oppose their resolutions, cannot but live in the memory of all who were present at that meeting. The outrageous and assassin-like attack made by a part of this *respectable body* upon Mr. *Fox*, as he was departing from the hall, fixes a stain of a deeper dye, and would furnish some colour, at least, to the arguments of those who might wish to persuade us, that the boasted police of this country, is not so much intended to preserve the peace, and protect the persons of the people, as to enforce a blind and abject submission to the will of the governing party! The conduct of these same *respectable gentlemen* at Grocer's Hall was, I understand, still more outrageous: Let any person compare these facts with the tran-

In short, it was Mr. *Burke* who condescended to be the "jackal," not of a *lion*, but of an *ape*, who, having run through all the tricks and metamorphoses of apostasy, determined, at last, to become a beast of prey, though he had neither the courage, nor the sagacity, to start his own game.

His new ally, however, caught up the scent with all imaginable keenness. No sooner did the troubles in France make their appearance, than he began to beat the war-provoking hide of "old John Zisca*" and call out for carnage and blood.—Like *Collins's* personification of Anger, forth.

"—— he rushed: his eyes on fire

"In lightnings own his secret stings!"

and, this too, at a time when every thing in that country was going on so humanely, so philosophically, so benevolently, that every generous heart in Europe sympathised with the triumphs

quill, firm, and orderly proceedings of the immense multitudes of common people assembled at *Chalk Farm*, *Copenhagen House*, and *Mary-le-bone Fields*—the regularity with which they transacted their business, and the peaceable manner in which they dispersed, as soon as it was over; let them add to this, an attentive examination of the behaviour of the plebeians and of the patrician order, in what are called the *seditions* of ancient *Rome*, and then let them draw what arguments they can in favour of the maxims and system of the present administration.

* Letter, &c. p. 3.

of

of Gallic liberty; and mankind began to lose their nationality, and nobles their prejudices, in the unbounded admiration of an event that promised a speedy extinction of those systems of devastation and ambition, which have hitherto been the greatest scourges of the universe.

It is in vain that Mr. *Burke* now raves about massacres, and sanguinary executions. It is in vain, that he disgusts our imaginations with tedious rhapsodies about "foul and ravenous birds" of prey—obscene revolutionary harpies, sprung "from night and hell, or from that chaotic anarchy which generates equivocally all monstrous, all prodigious things*!" At the time when his first wild and frantic publication on this subject ministered to the insidious designs of his present patrons, no excesses had taken place which could justify his abuse, or afford the least colour for regarding the French revolutionists as maniacs "who thought *The whole duty of man* consisted in destruction†." The revolution was then in the hands of "philosophers," and "literary men‡!" It had not yet fallen (as afterwards, from the unprincipled interference of foreign despots, and the still more fatal influence of foreign gold, scattered among emissaries "in the night cellars of Paris," to

* Letter, &c. p. 21. † Ibid. p. 57. ‡ Ibid. p. 57.

hire intrigue, and provoke insurrection, it did most undoubtedly fall under the management of "bravoes and banditti"—of "robbers and assassins." If his declamations against the changes that have taken place in that country, had never been heard till the system "of pillage, oppression, arbitrary imprisonment, confiscation, exile, revolutionary judgment, and legalized premeditated murder*" had been adopted; and those declamations had been abandoned when the cruelty and wickedness of this system were relinquished, he might have claimed some credit, perhaps, for his humanity; and have laid less open to the suspicion of a grounded abhorrence to every principle of liberty. Even then, however, we must have pitied the confusion of intellect that could not separate principles from unprincipled actions; and continue to revere the sentiments of truth and justice, however they might be violated by their professors: or rather by individuals of the country in which they were professed.

But it is the profession and occupation of this singular writer, to confound all distinctions by affected *antitheses*; to destroy all unities of time, place, and action, for the purposes of misrepresentation; to bewilder the understandings of his

* Letter, &c. p. 64.

readers, by incongruous mixtures of fact and fiction, and to build his conclusions upon artful transpositions, that unite things together which have no connection, and make causes the consequences of their own effects. His mode of analysis is to break down the whole series of events into one chaotic mass; and then, selecting such parts as are best suited to his purpose, and arranging them according to his own arbitrary fancy, to draw conclusions that contradict all the facts of history, and all the dictates of unsophisticated reason. Thus, for example, the French Revolution having at different periods, and under different circumstances, brought into action, upon the political theatre, some of the most enlightened philosophers that ever adorned, and some of the fiercest cannibals that have disgraced, the modern world, Mr. *Burke*, that every thing French, and every thing revolutionary, may be brought into abhorrence at once, confounds the two classes together under the denomination "of the Cannibal Philosophers of France *;" and exclaims, with affected astonishment, "In the French Revolution every thing is new; and from want of preparation to meet so unlooked for an evil, every thing is dangerous. Never, before this time, was a set of literary men converted into a gang of robbers and

* Letter, &c. p. 56, 59.

" assassins.

"assassins. Never before, did a den of bravoës
 "and banditti, assume the garb and tone of an
 "academy of philosophers*."

Never before! No, nor now. The author of
 "Reflections on the French Revolution," and
 the author of the "Rights of Man," are not more
 distinct—the sentiments of *Edmund Burke* on the
 American war, and the sentiments of *Edmund
 Burke* on the present crusade, are not more oppo-
 site than the men and the motives he has thus
 confounded together. They were men, not only
 distinct, but in positive opposition. As well
 might the till late unheard-of maxims of despo-
 tism, said to have been delivered by the Bishop
 of *Rocheſter* and Lord *Loughborough*, be attributed
 by future historians to the Earl of *Lauderdale*,
 by whom they were so spiritedly and so properly
 exposed†!—as well might *Thomas Paine* be re-
 proached with the virulent and unprincipled
 malignancy of stigmatising the oppressed, la-
 borious, and most valuable classes of society as
 a "swinish multitude," because he lived and
 wrote in the same age with the being who out-
 raged humanity with such scurrility, as the
 crimes of *Robespierre*, of *Couthon*, and of *Marat*,
 of the ATTORNEY GENERAL *Fouquier*, and the
 hangman *Le Bone*, be charged to the account of

* Letter, &c. p. 57.

† Debates on Lord *Grenville's* new treason bill.

the *Condorcets*, the *Isiards*, the *Rochefoucaults*, and the *Rolands*, who were the *victims*, not the *authors*, of the crimes which we deplore.

That the philosophers of France were too cold, too speculative, too slow and cautious, to have saved their country, in the desperate condition into which they were plunged by the coalition of German despots, and the intrigues and corruption of courts pretending neutrality---that they had too little of the energy of men of business for the stormy times they had to steer through, and that the profligate and detestable proclamation of the Duke of *Brunswick*, (the true *proximate cause* of all the massacres and horrors in *France*); required other antidotes than fine-spun theories and speculations, however just and excellent, I am ready to admit: nor shall I be backward in stigmatising with just epithets of abhorrence, the ferocious barbarity, the enormous, and almost unparalleled cruelty (I say almost---for I have not forgotten *Ismael* and *Warsaw*!) with which the more energetic party abused their power! But if it was the misfortune of *France*, that her philosophers were deficient in the powerful energies of manhood*, and her energetic characters defi-

* "France," says Madam Roland, "was in a manner destitute of men. Their scarcity has been truly surprising in this revolution, in which scarcely any thing but pigmies have appeared."

tute of the humanising temperament of philosophy, surely it is not therefore just, to attribute to the former the savage ferocity that deformed the latter; or, by confounding them together, to involve the whole in one indiscriminating censure, and endeavour to bring all science and philosophy into disgrace, and represent "*knowledge*" itself as "*rendered worse than ignorance*, by the "*enormous evils of this dreadful innovation*†." Still less will it be admissible, to attribute the mischiefs that sprung from these unfortunate combinations of circumstances to the principles of the

"appeared. I do not mean, however, that there was any
 "want of wit, of knowledge, of learning, of accomplish-
 "ments, or of philosophy. These ingredients, on the con-
 "trary, were never so common:—but as to that *firmness of*
 "*mind*, which J. J. Rousseau has so well defined, by calling it
 "*the first attribute of a hero*, supported by that *soundness of judg-*
 "*ment*, which knows how to set a true value upon things, and
 "by those *extensive views* which penetrate into futurity, altoge-
 "ther constituting *the character of a great man*, they were
 "sought for everywhere, and were scarcely any where to be
 "found." These observations display at once great pene-
 "tration and great prejudice in this extraordinary woman.
 "The latter prevented her from looking for *real greatness*
 "*of mind* beyond the boundaries of her own party; but the for-
 "mer compelled her to acknowledge, that within this pale it was
 "not to be found. The qualities, however, of which the *Gi-*
 "*rondist*s were so obviously deficient, were most eminently pos-
 "sessed by several of the Mountain party, and by *Danton*, in par-
 "ticular, perhaps in as high a degree as by any individual
 "whose "*name is destined to live in the pantheon of history*."

* Letter, &c. p. 21.

the revolution, if it can be proved (and the proof I think, would not be difficult), that *the imbecility of the philosophic, and the ferocity of the energetic party, had their remote causes alike in the vices and cruelties of the old despotism.*

Is Mr. *Burke* really so ignorant, or does he presume so far upon the ignorance of his fellow citizens—upon the “stupefaction of the dull English” “understanding*,” as to pretend that the *philosophers* and the *Septembrizers* of France were the same persons;—that the promulgators of the humane, the incontrovertible, the glorious principles that breathed through the speeches and declarations of the National Assembly, and enlarged, at once, the boundaries of science and philanthropy, were also the perpetrators of those horrid massacres, and still more horrible executions, by which all principles, all humanity, all justice, were so outrageously violated? Reason, at once, revolts at such a conclusion. But, fortunately, this argument, so important to the human race, does not rest upon the conclusions of speculative reason. Fact—strong, stubborn, incontrovertible fact (so hateful to the juggling philosophers of *the old sect*) stares us in the face so openly, that one knows not how sufficiently to admire the confidence of the man who could so grossly misrepresent

* Letter, &c. p. 63.

sent *events and affairs of yesterday*, or the supineness and voluntary ignorance of those whom such misrepresentations could deceive!

Who are the philosophers and metaphysicians of France, whose subtile theories of humanity, and refinements of universal philanthropy, have been so mixed and confounded with cold barbarity, or savage ferocity, as to justify this favourite Claudian figure of rhetoric—"cannibal philosophy," with which we are so frequently indulged? Which of the *metaphysicians of France* has been "ready to declare," either by word or action, "that he did not think a prerogation of humanity for two thousand years, too long a period for the good he pursued?—or that his imagination was not fatigued with the contemplation of human suffering, through the wild waste of centuries, added to centuries of misery and desolation*?"

I could point out, with infinite facility, certain *English metaphysicians*, who go much beyond all this; whose "humanity," (and whose liberty also) may be truly considered as "at their horizon; and like the horizon, always to fly before them*:" who would put *Liberty to sleep*, that she might be able (when they thought it convenient) to open her eyes—preserve the freedom of the Constitution, by establishing despotism upon its ruins; shew their hatred

* Letter, &c. p. 62.

of violence, by incessant appeals to military coercion; their love of justice, by sanguinary persecutions *iniquitously legal*; and their humanity, by a conspiracy to starve twenty-four millions of people: and who, so far from being "fatigued with the contemplation of human suffering, through the wide waste of centuries, "added to centuries of misery and desolation," wish for *eternal war—eternal massacre, pillage, and desolation*;—pronounce, that peace with regicides *never* must be made*; and seem to wish, that when their *tongues* can no longer call for blood and carnage, "their *skins* may be made "into *drums*, to animate *Europe* to eternal "battle†."

It is easy also to point out metaphysicians in this country, who answer too well some other of Mr. *Burke's* descriptions—who "with ‡ their sophistical *Rights*" (not "*of man*," it is true, but) of *rotten-boroughmongers*, "to falsify the account, and "the sword § as a make weight to throw into the "scale," profess to have armed one part of their fellow citizens for the subjugation of another; and protect the freedom of senatorian debate, by threatening to answer the arguments of their opponents with the sabres of a *prætorian cavalry*.

* Letter, &c. p. 80. † Ibid. p. 3. ‡ Ibid. p. 54.

§ See debates on Colonel M'Leod's motion on the subject of the Fencible Cavalry.

How gracefully appeals to humanity and virtue come from such lips as these! How fit and appropriate to such men, the moral indignation which bursts forth in reproaches of *Barbarism* and *Cannibal Philosophy*!

I wish not to degenerate from argument to abuse. I trust I have conducted myself throughout these strictures with a temper and moderation which will shew, at least, that *Sans Culottism*, in its true signification*, is not inconsistent with the urbanity and mildness of polished life; and I should be sorry, towards the close of my labours, to forfeit a character so essential to public utility: but if hard words must be used—if our adversaries, in defect of argument, will appeal to abuse, can it be helped if the ill directed ball rebounds? and may it not be admissible, so far, to retort upon them, their *uncitizen-like* (or, in their own language, *ungentleman-like*) epithets, as to ask them, whether these are not the real literary assassins—the real philosophical banditti, and metaphysical bravoës, from whose example they have derived those extravagant and incongruous definitions which, by a strange jumble of characters and events, they endeavour,

* I beg leave to quote from the earliest of my political works, my own definition of a *Sans Culotte*.—"An advocate for the rights and happiness of those who are languishing in "want and nakedness." *Pol. Lect.* p. 26.

in their virulent rhapsodies, to apply to the *philosophers* and *literary men* of France?—But the jaundiced eye of prejudice sees every thing discoloured, and knows not that the distemper exists in itself.

I mean not to deny that crimes and excesses have been perpetrated in *France*. Deeds have been done “at which the face of heaven glows with horror!” But let not Mr. *Burke* hide the deformity of his own cause in this black cloud of indiscriminate abuse. Let him bring forth his lists of philosophical banditti and assassins; and let us see this pretended connection between the *metaphysics* “of the new sect,” and the crimes that have torn that sometime-distracted country, or his attack upon *French principles* must fall to the ground. If the *excesses* cannot be proved, either logically or experimentally, to have been connected with the *principles*, coincidence of time is nothing to the purpose; and the one cannot be said to have produced the other. Now if the principles did not produce the excesses, the excesses must have been produced by something else: and nothing can be more illogical than to condemn any set of principles on account of consequences that never resulted from them.

It matters not, I repeat it, that the principles were propounded, and the excesses committed nearly about the same time. If a philosopher and an assassin happen to take shelter at the same inn,

is

is the philosopher therefore a cut-throat, and the assassin a metaphysician? But Mr. *Burke's* way of arguing is still more inconsistent and unjust.— A banditti of ruffians, or “cannibals,” if he pleases (for I can find no epithet too strong for their crimes) having broken in upon a company of philosophers, who were teaching the principles of justice and philanthropy to a throng of newly emancipated slaves, they killed and devoured the greater part of them, and then began to fall upon the pupils: and for this reason, and for no other, (unless it be that the philosophers had assisted the throng in escaping from the tyranny of their masters) this acute logician confounds together, the devourers and the devoured; and because one party were philosophers and the other cannibals, calls them a set of cannibal philosophers.

Is not this, I demand, a fair statement of the case? Consider, I conjure you, my fellow citizens, for the question is well worthy of serious examination; and it is time we laid aside our animosities and our heats, and examined it with temper and moderation. The misrepresentations that have too long inflamed our minds “are not “wholly without an object*!” While we are waging war with Gallic Liberty, we are losing our own. Corruption has been long assailing us

* Letter, &c. p. 4.

on every side; and though her shafts may have been steeped in anodynes to prevent the present smart, the wounds are, for that very reason, the more dangerous. Despotism is now approaching with gigantic strides; and, distracted and alarmed by a thousand incoherent terrors, we are sinking, for shelter, into the vale of abject submission. But let us dissipate, in good time, these visionary delusions,—these vapours of the drowsy brain; lest, when awakened at last upon the extreme verge of destruction, we should be obliged to return by that uphill path whose rugged acclivities have occasioned so many strains and bruises to our unhappy neighbour.

“ *Awake! arise! or be for ever fallen!!!*”

Be not deluded by idle rhapsodies and arbitrary combinations. Excesses and cruelties are not forms of government. Actions are not principles—either *old* or *new*. Philosophy is not a cannibal; nor can a cannibal be a philosopher! The *new principles of France*, as they are called, are good in themselves:—the principles of equal rights, and equal laws. They are, in fact, the *oldest principles in the world*: the principles upon which the wisest and happiest governments of antiquity were founded: expanded and improved, it is true, but not fundamentally altered, by the wisdom derived from the improved state of human society—the wider
diffusion

diffusion of intellectual acquirement—and the more general intercourse of mankind.

These principles, I repeat it, in themselves are good. If our antagonists are seriously of a different opinion, why do they not examine them, without misrepresentation or abuse, on the simple foundation of their own merits or defects? Why confound them with other things? Why pretend to discuss principles, and talk of nothing, in reality, but the actions of unprincipled men? Is time unsteady, because my watch goes wrong? Is it not noon when the sun is in the meridian, because the parish dial is out of repair? Can *principles*, which are the sun of the intellectual universe, be changed in their nature or their course by the vile actions of a few ruffians? Prove to me, by dispassionate argument, that the *principles* of the French Revolution are false and pernicious, and I will relinquish them at once; and thank you for delivering me from my errors. But while my reason tells me that they are consonant *in themselves* with truth and justice, it is not calling them *French principles*—it is not calling them *new lights*—it is not *the hoary prejudice of six thousand years*—it is not calling me *Jacobin*, nor calling others *cannibal philosophers*—it is not talking of the “ignorant flippancy*” of a man whom the learned solidity of colleges and consistories have never been

* Letter, &c. p. 77.

able to answer---it is not all the declamatory bitterness of *Burke*, the metaphysical frenzy of *Windham*, the sanguinary rage of *Pitt*, nor the long-winded sophistry of *Scott* and *Mitford*, shall compel me to relinquish these important truths: ---no; not though it could be proved that the crimes of *Marat* and *Robespierre* surpassed the savage wickedness of the fiend *Zwarrow*, and the ferocity of Croats and Hulus.

Marat and *Robespierre* were no more to be regarded as integral parts of the new principles of France, than *Pitt* and *Dundas* as parts of the old principles of England; or than the fire of London as having been a part of the river Thames, because its waves were blackened by the rubbish of falling houses, and the blazing rafters floated along the stream. The rafters and the rubbish were swept into the sea, and the Thames regained its wonted clearness: *Marat* and *Robespierre* are swallowed up in the ocean of eternity, and the new principles of France remain; and if *Pitt* and *Dundas* were to die of a surfeit, after a *Wimbledon* dinner, I do not believe, for my own part, that our liberties would be less secure.

As men are not principles, so neither are particular actions. Mr. *Burke* might as well contend, that barracks and subsidized mercenaries, and the short memory of a minister on a trial of life and death, are the British constitution, as that

the tyranny of *Robespierre* was the new French system of philosophy and politics. To come still closer to the point, it were as rational to affirm, that the massacres of Glencoe were the principles of our Glorious Revolution, as that the massacres of September were the principles of the Revolution of France!

That the revolution has had its "harpies*," as detestable as either *Virgil* or *Mr. Burke* has described, who feasted on the general wreck, and were for leaving "nothing unrent, unrifled, unravaged, or unpolluted*," there can be no doubt: nor is it necessary, to account for the generation of "these foul and ravenous birds of prey*," to descend with the poet to the regions which superstition has peopled with more than mortal wickedness; or to mount with the political declaimer to the regions of philosophy and metaphysics.

What sort of figure *Fouquier Tinnanville* would have made by the side of the metaphysical *Sir John Scott*, I do not pretend to say; but who ever suspected either *Marat*, *Robespierre*, *Le Bon*, or any of that sanguinary party, of visionary subtleties and metaphysical abstraction? Which of those fine-spun metaphysical theories, whose abstract perfection is so abhorrent to *Mr. Burke's* "instincts,"—which of those breviaries of funda-

* Letter, &c. p. 21.

mental principles which commanded the assent, and excited the admiration of the philosophical world, is attributed to either of these men? *Robespierre*, it is true, was a member of the Constituent Assembly; and we find him, at an early period, in possession of considerable popularity; but his popularity was not of a description to class him with those *speculative literati* against whom the politicians of the *old sect* have conceived such an inveterate abhorrence.

However this country may be disposed to indulge its vanity in comparisons, they are not always to our advantage. The *French Robespierre* was no *apostate*. There was a certain steadiness and consistency in his conduct and character, which, (together with some grand traits of simplicity and disinterestedness) even in the midst of abhorrence, compel us to respect him. Again, I repeat it, comparisons are not always in our favour: in the character of the *French Robespierre* there was nothing to excite our contempt. He had vices--demons of desolation! bear witness, he had vices: but they were not the vices of corruption. He neither maintained himself in riotous luxury, nor enriched lethargic brothers, and imbecile relations with the plunder of his country, disguised under the specious names of places and pensions. He had cruelty too, the thought

of which makes one's flesh creep: but though he issued a decree to give no quarter to *Britons* or *Hanoverians*, found in arms, he never entered into a conspiracy to *starve* twenty-four millions of men, women, and children!—He had virtues too—grand magnificent virtues! for “pure unmixed, dephlegmated, defoecated evil,” exists no where but in the inflamed imagination of Mr. *Burke*. He was superior to all the sordid temptations that debauch the little mind—the allurements of luxury, ostentation, and rapacity. Surrounded by all the temptations of unlimited power, he lived like a private citizen, and he died a pauper.

Robespierre was, however, from the first a man of blood. He was for giving every thing to the people, it is true; but he was for giving it them not by the cultivation and expansion of intellect, but by commotion, and violence, and sanguinary revenge: and therefore it was that the revolutionary movements of *Robespierre*, perhaps, in despite of himself, hurried him into the most insufferable of all tyrannies, instead of conducting the people to freedom. There can be no freedom in the world but that which has its foundations in the increased knowledge and liberality of mankind. Tyranny comes by violence, or by corruption: but Liberty is the gift of Reason.

Of

Of this important truth the Revolutionary Tyrant seems to have been entirely ignorant; and from this defect, and the want of personal courage, proceeded, I believe, all the errors and all the horrors of his administration. Nay, so far was he from that metaphysical abstraction, which places its confidence in fine spun theories and bird's-eye speculations, that his conduct has given birth to a report, that he cherished almost as inveterate an abhorrence against philosophers and literati, as Mr. *Burke* and his new friends.— So far was he from upholding the dangerous heresy of illimitable inquiry, that he would have roasted an atheist at the stake with as much satisfaction as the most pious bishop of the church.

During the reign of his desolating tyranny, philosophy was silenced, science was proscribed, and daring speculation soared no more. France was threatened with midnight ignorance; and in the *Club of the Cordeliers*, at that time one of the instruments of his tyranny, a motion was even made to consume the public libraries.

Away, then, with these shallow pretences for degrading the noblest exercise of human intellect. Away with this idle jargon of cannibal philosophers and literary banditti! So unnatural an alliance never yet was formed; nor ever will. The assassins and ruffians of every clime, whether
in

in the pay of regular or revolutionary tyrannies, have a sort of universal instinct whispering to them, that knowledge and oppression cannot thrive together.

"If we do not silence the press," says *Woolsey*, "the press will silence us:" and *Robespierre* (a little wiser in this respect than *Edmund Burke*) prohibited, in the Jacobin Club, the publication of his own speeches; lest his intemperance should provoke discussions which his tyranny could not afterwards controul.

But though the pretences of Mr. *Burke* for confounding together the *philosophy* and the *crimes of France* are thus completely refuted, I do not expect that the ground will be abandoned. It is too important a part of the permanent conspiracy against the liberties of mankind to be readily given up. Remove but this delusion from the eyes of the people, and the reign of Corruption could not last—"no, not for a twelvemonth." The principles of liberty are so consonant to the general good--the cause of the rotten borough-mongers is so destitute of all rational support, and the miseries produced by that system are so numerous, that nothing but the groundless terrors so artfully excited--nothing but the prejudices inspired against all speculation and enquiry, by confounding together things that have no connection, could possibly prevent the people of Britain shouting from every village,

village, town, and street, with one unanimous and omnipotent voice—

JOH “REFORM! REFORM! REFORM!!”

Of this the faction in power are sufficiently aware; and therefore it is, that their hatred and persecution are principally directed, not against the furious and the violent, but against the enlightened and humane. Therefore it is, that they endeavour to confound together, by chains of connection slihter than the spider's web, every sanguinary expression, every intemperate action of the obscurest individual whose mind has become disordered by the calamities of the times, not with the oppressions and miseries that provoke them, but with the honest and virtuous labours of those *true sons of moderation and good order* who wish to render their fellow citizens firm and manly, that they may have no occasion to be tumultuous and savage; to spread the solar light of reason, that they may extinguish the grosser fires of vengeance; and to produce a timely and temperate reform, as the only means of averting an ultimate revolution. These are the men against whom the bitterest malice of persecution is directed. These are the men against whom every engine of abuse and misrepresentation is employed; to calumniate whom their “*Briton*,” and their “*Times*,” and their dirty Grub-street pamphleteers, are pensioned

out

out of the public plunder—and against whom grave senators from their benches, and *pensioned Cicero's* from their literary retreats, are not ashamed to pour forth their meretricious eloquence, in torrents of defamation, and to exhaust all the fury of inventive (or *deluded*) malice. These are the men for whose blood they thirst; and whom they endeavour to destroy by new doctrines, not only of accumulative and constructive treason, but of *treason by second sight*: making them accountable for actions they were never consulted upon, books they never read, and sentiments they never heard. These, in short, are the men for whose destruction laws are perverted, spies are employed, and perjurers are pensioned: and when all these artifices prove inadequate to the end, these are the men to stop whose mouths bills have been proposed, in parliament, subversive of every principle of the constitution, lest the nation at large should be in time convinced that they are not what they have been represented: but that *the friends of Liberty and Reform, are the true friends of Humanity and Order!*

This would be, indeed, a terrible discovery for those who are supported by corruption: and in this point of view one cannot blame them for the selection they have made of the objects of their persecuting hatred. To let their vengeance fall at once upon the really violent, would be an
act

act of impolicy, that would shew them "to be foolish, even above the weight of privilege allowed to wealth*" and power. Were these suppressed (arguing upon their own supposition, that persecution can suppress) what would become of those pretences by which, alone, they have rendered the advocates of reform obnoxious to the fears, and consequently to the hatred, of the alarmists? But if they could destroy the real reformers, the men of reason, of humanity, of intellect, they would destroy the magnets (if I may so express myself) around which, whenever their influence shall become sufficiently diffused through the intelligent atmosphere, the good sense, the spirit, the virtue of the country, must be attracted; and when it is so attracted, and when the parts shall firmly and peaceably cohere, and, thus brought under the influence of the true laws of nature, shall press together, with the united force of attraction and gravitation, to one common centre of truth, the seven days work of creation is complete---the system is restored to order; and the unruly tempest of tyranny and corruption shall endeavour in vain to prolong "the reign of chaos and old night:" the planet shall roll on, regardless of the storm---grace, beauty, fertility, happiness, shall flourish in full luxuriance, and

* Letter, &c. p. 55.

the meteors of delusion shall burst and expire. But were this principle destroyed—were those powers of intellect and virtue by which, alone, this grand harmony can be produced, suppressed by the timely interference of superior power, and every thing left to the misguidance of those *ignes fatui* of intemperance and revenge, which, in the night of ignorance, a foul corrupted atmosphere never fails to ingender, in the low, rank, marshy fens of vulgar intellect, the friends of liberty would be no longer formidable; but while they floundered about in a thousand wild directions, destitute of any common principle, and unconscious whither they were going, must presently be swallowed up in the bogs, and swamps, and quagmires of their own delusion.

In simpler language, though commotion and violence are the watch-words of alarm, it is the progress of reason---the power of presiding intellect, of which, in reality, the borough-mongering oligarchy stand in dread. This, they are justly apprehensive, may in time disseminate what they call its *infectious influence*, so far as to paralyse the very hands of corruption, and cause the sceptre of their surreptitious authority to fall, by the mere operation of its own weight, from their enfeebled grasp. But as for actual violence---this they can despise: ---this, some parts of their conduct, and many of their sentiments, would almost lead one to suspect

pect them of being desirous to provoke. Their military, they may suppose, would quickly suppress any insurrection; the tumult would afford a convenient opportunity of ridding the country of obnoxious individuals*; and, while the victorious sword was yet out of the scabbard, who could blame them, if they took the opportunity of organizing a *military despotism*? But the friends of liberty are aware of this; and their conduct has proved how little they deserve the calumnies of Mr. *Burke*, and the ministerial faction. Intemperate language may sometimes have been used, and even received with intemperate applause;

* I understand that a certain officer, of some rank in the army, has avowed that instructions of this kind have been given: "If any tumult should arise," he is reported to have said, "we know our game. We should not spend our fury on the *rabble*," (such is the language they use towards those useful members of society, whose industry supports and feeds them!) "we should look out for those prating rascals, * * * * * , and make sure of them, wherever they were to be found." I shall not insert the names that were placed at the head of this black list of proscription, for more reasons than one. Suffice it to say, they were such as fully to justify the above chain of reasoning. They were not men of blood—not men of violence—not men who yelp for tumult or revenge; who call out for rebellion, or breathe forth slaughter. No—no:—such characters are safe (for the present). They are the nest eggs: the hen pheasants, whom the keen sportsman must spare, that they may breed fresh game. Let us hope, however, that this was only gasconade: a *military bounce*: and that human nature is not yet so depraved, that such instructions could be either given or accepted.

but the voice of reason has always been the commanding voice; nor could the grossest insults, nor the most methodised attempts of treasury hirelings, police ruffians†, and ministerial fanatics, (for there are fanatics, it should be remembered, of all sects) ever throw them into confusion, or provoke them to violence.

But Mr. *Burke* would be ill qualified for a champion in behalf of that cause he has *now* undertaken to support, if he could not confound together the clear and obvious distinctions between intellectual firmness and tumultuous violence—the energies of the mind, and the energies of the dagger! Ill would he be calculated to support the tottering cause of oligarchy and corruption, if he could not divert popular attention from the abuses and violence of his own party, by exciting unmerited odium against all intellect and enquiry, and throwing upon the philosopher and the philanthropist the imputation of those crimes which the enemies and persecutors of those characters in reality perpetrate, whether in France or Britain.

The sophistries, however, and misrepresentations of my antagonist end not here. Not only has he confounded together characters and events that

† For a striking illustration of the propriety of this expression, see “*Narrative of Facts*,” prefixed to “*Political Lectures*,” vol. I. part 1. p. xii. and xiii.”

were in reality distinct—not only has he charged the crimes of a few ferocious usurpers upon a whole people, and made the philosophers of France the authors and promoters of that very system of cruelty, in resisting which so many of them lost their lives; but he has assigned the excesses and crimes of the revolution *altogether* to a wrong cause; and charged upon *republicanism* the guilt of ingendering those hideous propensities—those enormous depravities of gigantic wickedness, which nothing but *despotism* ever did, or ever can produce. His talent seems, indeed, to lay quite in this way. In his “Reflections,” in defiance of the well-known fact, that the famine, or *great scarcity of bread*, was one of the principal causes of the revolution, he charged the revolution with having produced that famine. I am not, therefore, surprised to find him still obstinately persisting in charging all those cannibal dispositions upon the Republic, and the *Rights of Man*, which could not have existed at all, if the old despotism had not generated them; and which, at any rate, the revolution would only give their proprietors an opportunity of displaying in deeds of open violence and commotion, instead of employing them to perpetrate the secret cruelties and assassinations of the court—in devastations sanctioned by *regular authorities*, and oppressions “*iniquitously legal!*”

That

That popular commotions call all the vices, as well as the virtues of the community into action, cannot ^{but} be ^{admitted} ~~denied~~. That when "the cauldron of civil contention" is boiling over, the foulest ingredients will sometimes be at the top; and that, in the general fermentation, combinations the most deleterious will sometimes be formed, no reflecting man has ever yet denied. It is an additional argument* why the rulers of the earth should take care not to render such commotions necessary and inevitable.

Happy, thrice happy shall it be for those princes and governments, who derive a useful lesson from the events that have passed before us! Happy, thrice happy shall it be for those wise and moderate rulers, who, in this busy, changeful, and enquiring age, put not their trusts in *janissaries* or *Swiss Guards*; but, adopting the salutary advice of the great Lord *Verulam*, shall illustrate by their conduct that profound and salutary maxim, that "the surest way to prevent sedition" is not by suppressing complaints with too much severity, but to take away the matter of them.*" In other words, the best way to manage the distemper, is not to amputate the limb but to remove the cause.

* *Essays, Civil and Moral*, p. 77. and 80. *edition 1725*. Title — *Of Seditions and Troubles*. Query, Why has Mr. *Burke* overlooked this essay!

But

But whatever vices and dispositions the heat of popular commotion may call into action, must have been generated by former circumstances. Extraordinary exigencies place men in strong lights, and shew them such as they are: but they do not create characters of a sudden; nor manufacture mankind anew. Revolutions are touchstones for the real dispositions; but they do not, like the whisp of a harlequin's sword, change the dove into a tyger, or the tyger into a dove. If, therefore, we were to admit that all the revolutionists—the whole body of the French people, were indiscriminately involved in the guilt of those excesses so exultingly quoted, and so wickedly exaggerated by the foes of liberty—what would be the conclusion? Where would the blame in reality fall, but upon that old system of despotism, for the restoration of which Mr. Burke “would animate Europe to eternal battle?”

The revolution in France, or more properly speaking, the philosophers and patriots who first set the *new order of things* in motion, did not create their agents. They did not sow the earth (like *Cadmus*) with dragon's teeth, and reap a harvest of men to carry on their projects. They were obliged to make use of the instruments already made to their hands; and when the game was on foot, the bad as well as the good would have their share of the play. If, to resume the allusion,

a race

a race of contentious homicides did burst from the ground, and alternately destroy each other, the seed was sown by the *old despotism*, not by the *new philosophy*.

Mr. *Burke*, indeed, himself seems conscious, that the wild and ferocious characters he declaims against, could not have been formed by the revolution—he knew that *the men whom he stigmatizes for projecting and forming the Republic, could not have been formed and educated by the Republic*. Unwilling, therefore, to assign, in plain terms, the generation of the monsters he describes to the right cause, he calls in the aid of poetry, and tells us, that these “revolution harpies, sprung from “night and hell, and from chaotic anarchy, “which generates equivocally all monstrous, all “prodigious things.”—True, Mr. *Burke*, I thank you for the allusion. The revolution *harpies* did spring, most assuredly, from what with classical precision of metaphor you have called *hell*, and *night*, and *chaotic anarchy*. They sprung, indeed, from that hell of despotism, into the very abyss of which *France* had for whole centuries been plunged—They sprung, indeed, from that night of ignorance in which the best faculties of the human mind had been so long enveloped and extinguished—They sprung, indeed, from that chaotic anarchy of vice, licentiousness, profligate luxury, and unprincipled debauchery, into which the

the morals of the country had been thrown by the influence and example of the court, and which, it is rightly said, *generates equivocally all monstrous, all prodigious things!* These were, indeed, the infernal sources of all the evil: and but for that "night, that hell, that chaotic anarchy," of the old despotic system, such "obscene harpies,"—such "foul and ravenous birds of prey," never could have been in existence, to "hover over the heads, and soufe down upon the tables," of the revolutionists, and "rend, and rifle, and ravage, and pollute, with the slime of their filthy offal," the wholesome banquet, which the philosophers of the revolution had occasioned to be spread for the social enjoyment and sustenance of mankind.

Such *were* the monsters generated in the infernal region of the old tyranny; and in such regions such monsters always *must be* generated, till effects shall cease to be commensurate to their causes, and nature's self shall change. Was it not time then, think you, that this "great deep" were broken up---that the chaotic mass of tyranny and corruption might be thrown into new motion, by the addition of some fresh principle, or stimulus, by means of which (through whatever noise and uproar) a more wholesome arrangement might be produced---

"And from confusion bring forth beauteous order?"

N

It

It is in vain to tell me, that these harpies were no harpies to mankind till they shewed themselves as such. Despotism had always its harpies: and they were always well banqueted. They banqueted in silence, indeed, under the *old system*: they were not garrulous, as under the *new order*: nor did the press trumpet forth their atrocities. But they rent, and ravaged, and rifled, and polluted, and devoured, and acted all their horrors and abominations, with avidity and diligence enough, for centuries before the revolutionary system was set in motion. Of this Mr. *Burke*, and every man who is travelled, either in climes or books, is well informed. They had their public theatres, in which they tore the quivering limbs of their prey, for the amusement of courtly spectators; and they had their cages—their cells—their Bastiles, or, as Mr. *Burke*, more delicately calls them, “king’s “castles*,” where they might banquet in silence, and riot undisturbed in all the horrid luxuries of cruelty. The revolution gave them nothing but a voice: and this attribute was ultimately beneficial: for their hideous shrieks and yells, and the audacious publicity of their cruel ravages, concentrated, at last, the general hatred of the country they infested. They were hunted to their caverns; and the race has become extinct.

* Reflections, &c.

I do not, however, mean to affirm that the harpies of the new system were the same individuals as would have been the harpies of the old: though, in many instances, it was probably the case. Cruelty is cruelty, under whatever system it acts; and an inquisitor, a Fermier General, and the president of the revolutionary tribunal, in the *reel* of political mutation, might join hands, turn round, and change positions *ad infinitum*, without ever appearing out of place.

But this is not all. Inhuman oppression generates inhuman revenge. All strong impressions produce strong effects. That which we passionately detest, we are sometimes in as much danger of imitating, as that which we passionately admire. How often does the hatred of cruelty degenerate into the very thing we abhor? How often does the hatred of tyranny render men most tyrannical?—for the hatred of tyranny is one thing—the love of liberty is another. The former is a common instinct; the latter is the noblest attainment of reason. Add to which, that *lex talionis* is, with the generality of mankind, the law of moral action. “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth,” is inculcated as the mandate of Deity. But the nobility and clergy of France, had not eyes and teeth enough to answer this account. Can we wonder at what ensued?

It would have been well for France, if the influence of the old tyranny upon the moral character of the people, had terminated with the evils here enumerated. If the cruelty of long-established oppression had only made the irritable ferocious, and the ignorant revengeful, these destructive passions might have been controuled by the energy of more cultivated minds, till they had been softened and humanized by the influence of more favourable circumstances. But tyranny had not left to the revolution the possibility of the crime with which Mr. *Burke* has charged it in a former pamphlet. It had "slain the mind* of the country" long before that revolution took place. Literature, it is true, had been highly cultivated. Science had been liberally patronized, in the upper circles; and even that republican talent, *eloquence*, had been cherished with a diligence most important, in its ultimate consequences, to mankind. But the jealous nature of the government—the terrors of the Bastille—the shackles of an imprimatur—the homage exacted by birth and fortune, and, above all, the frivolity and effeminacy of character imposed on the nation by a profligate, thoughtless, and luxurious court, which, having

* Reflections, &c.

nothing manly in itself, could not be expected to tolerate manhood in its dependants, "dwarfed" "the growth" of that mental energy which these tastes and studies could not otherwise have failed of producing. Hence originated the circumstance of which the female citizen *Roland* complains, that the revolution produced no *men*. The course of study had been perverted by the influence of the government. The closet of the philosopher was infected by the contagion of the court. Solidity was sacrificed to ornament---the virtues to the graces. In acuteness, subtilty, penetration, and even profundity, their literati were not deficient: but they wanted that boldness---that active energy---that collected, unembarrassed, firmness and presence of mind, which nothing but the actual enjoyment of liberty, and an unrestrained intercourse with a bold, resolute, bustling, and disputatious race of men can possibly confer. This energy of mind, without which it is impossible, in any useful and important sense of the word, to be a man of business, must be sought among "thronged and promiscuous audiences," "in theatres and halls of assembly;" for there only it is to be found. The philosophers of France, however, from the necessities under which they were placed by the government and institutions of the country, either mingled with the gay circles of the dissolute and great, and became infected

fectcd with servile effeminacy, or indulged their speculations in a sort of fullen retirement, where the masculine boldness of the true philosophic character was chilled by solitary abstraction.

Thus did the genius of the old despotism destroy, alike, the humanity of the bold, and the energy of the humane and enlightened. And thus it was that, the philosophers being feeble, and the men of intrepidity being ferocious, the republic was torn and distracted by the crimes which the despotism had prepared.

If it were necessary to strengthen this argument with historical evidence---if it were necessary to prove by particular records, that the disposition to these inhuman crimes did not originate in the nature and influences of *republican government*, we might appeal to the *massacres of St. Bartholomew*; to the barbarous oppressions and wanton cruelties described by *Arthur Young*, in the first edition of his travels, as spreading misery and desolation through the lordships and feignories of what Mr. *Burke* calls "the *virtuous* nobility of France*;" and, above all, to the inhuman punishments---the savage protraction of lingering, but exquisite tortures, with which inventive cruelty, in some notorious instances, gratified the appetite of royal vengeance. Nay, whatever might

* Letter, &c. p. 49.

be the conduct of particular leaders, rendered cruel at first by their intolerant zeal, and afterwards, still more so by their dread of retribution, it would not be difficult to prove, that *the character of the people was humanized and improved*, instead of being rendered more ferocious by the influence of the revolution. I appeal, in particular, even to the very circumstance of the decree, that no quarter should be given to the *British* or *Hanoverians*. What was the consequence of that decree? The brave soldiers of the republic refused to execute it, even in an individual instance; and the dictator was obliged to recal a mandate which he found himself unable to enforce. Would the soldiers of the old despotism, who perpetrated the horrors of the night of St. Bartholomew, have so refused? Did the military slaves of our good ally, the Empress, display the same obstinate repugnance to a still more inhuman order? Let the ghosts of murdered babes and sucking mothers, that still hover unappeased over the captive towers of *Ismael* and *Warsaw*, answer the solemn question!

Having thus replied to the arguments, or rather to the abuse, of Mr. *Burke*, against the revolutionary philosophers of France; and having shewn, in the first place, that the cannibals and the philosophers were not only distinct, but opposite, sets
of

of men; and, in the next, that the cannibalism proceeded not from the revolution but from the old despotism; it is not necessary to examine, very elaborately, the truth of his assertion, that "every thing in this revolution is new." If my arguments are just (and they are advanced in the very sincerity of my heart) it is matter of little consequence whether every thing is new, or every thing derived from ancient precedent. All that I shall do, therefore, is to quote from *Machiavel*, his brief abstract of the causes and progress of revolutions, that the reader may see how far the observations of that fine historian and acute politician will countenance this bold assertion.

"At the beginning of the world," says this author, "the inhabitants being few, they lived dispersed after the manner of beasts. Afterwards, as they multiplied, they began to unite, and, for their better security, to look out for such as were more strong, robust, and valiant, that they might *choose* one out of them to make him their head, and pay him obedience*."—He then briefly sketches the progress of society to another stage, when the people having emerged in some degree from barbarism, "being to make an *election of their prince*, they did not so much

* Discourses on first decade of Livy, Book I. chap. 2.

"respect

“ respect the ability of his body, as the qualifica-
 “ tion of his mind, *choosing* him that was most
 “ prudent and just. But by degrees their go-
 “ vernment coming to be hereditary, and not by
 “ election, according to their former way, *those*
 “ *who inherited degenerated from their ancestors, and,*
 “ *neglecting all virtuous actions, began to believe that*
 “ *princes were exalted for no other end but to discrimi-*
 “ *nate themselves from their subjects by their pomp,*
 “ *luxury, and other effeminate qualities; by which*
 “ *means they fell into the hatred of the people, and,*
 “ *by consequence, became afraid of them; and that*
 “ fear encreasing, they began to meditate revenge,
 “ oppressing some and disobliging others, *till*
 “ *insensibly the government altered, and fell into ty-*
 “ *ranny.* And these were the first grounds of
 “ ruin, *the first occasion of conjuration and conspiracy*
 “ *against princes; not so much in the pusillanimous*
 “ and poor, as in those whose generosity, spirit,
 “ and riches would not suffer them to submit
 “ to such dishonourable administrations. The
 “ multitude following the example of the nobi-
 “ lity, took up arms against their prince; and
 “ having conquered and extirpated that govern-
 “ ment, they subjected themselves to the nobility,
 “ which had freed them. These detesting the
 “ name of a single person, took the government
 “ upon themselves; and, at first (reflecting upon
 “ the late tyranny) governed according to new
 O “ laws,

" laws, devised by themselves, postponing parti-
 " cular profit to public advantage; so that both
 " the one and the other were preserved and
 " managed with great diligence and exactness.
 " But *their authority afterwards descending upon*
 " *their sons, who, being ignorant of the variations of*
 " *fortune, as not having experienced her incon-*
 " *stancy, and not contenting themselves with a civil*
 " *equality, but falling into rapine, oppression, ambition,*
 " *and adulteries, they changed the government*
 " *again, and brought it from an Optimacy to be*
 " *governed by a few, without any respect or considera-*
 " *tion to justice or civility: so that in a short time it*
 " *happened to them as to the tyrant: for the multitude*
 " *being weary of their government, were ready to*
 " *assist any body that would attempt to remove it.*
 " By these means, in a short time, it was extin-
 " guished: and forasmuch as *the tyranny of their*
 " *prince and the insolence of their nobles were fresh in*
 " *their memory, they resolved to restore neither one nor*
 " *the other, but concluded upon a popular state.*

Such is the brief abstract, drawn by the mas-
 terly pen of *Machiavel*, of the origin, progress, and
 revolutions of political society: and though some
 particular instances may be marked with partial
 varieties in one feature, and some in another, such is
 the general picture exhibited by the histories of the
 revolutions that have agitated the celebrated na-
 tions of the ancient and modern world. The lesson

it teaches is most important. Well would it be for the rulers of the earth, if they would lay the instruction to their hearts; and instead of producing by one sort of revolution the necessity of another, would pay that *respect* to the liberties of their particular countries, which they are so anxious to exact towards their own persons and authority. It is true that, in the style and language of history in general, there is but one species of revolution, specifically marked as such—the revolutions by which governments are overthrown: but if we seriously attend either to this abstract, or to the histories of the nations, of which it is so just a summary, we shall find that these have *uniformly* been preceded by revolutions of another kind—the revolutions by which governments become tyrannical.

In one respect then, at least, and that the most important of all—in respect to its causes, there was nothing like novelty in the French Revolution; nothing that could surprise or astonish us. The *pomp, luxury, and effeminacy of the court* had been long notorious. The extravagant and profligate dissipation of the princes, their *neglect of all virtuous actions*, and their indulgence in every vice, was a common theme of reproach against them, among all the nations of Europe. The *sanguinary and vindictive spirit of the laws*, the *rapine, oppression, and jealous tyranny of the govern-*

ment, and the consequent misery and destruction of the people, (in this country at least) were become proverbial; and *slavery and wooden shoes* was the logic by which we justified our hatred of the French nation*. Surely these were causes enough to justify a revolution---causes enough to produce one. The only astonishment must be, that it did not come before.

All that has even the *appearance* of novelty in the *origin* of this event, consists in the nobility and the monarchy being overthrown together. But this very circumstance shews the profundity of *Machiavel*, and the accuracy of his reasoning; and exposes the "flippancy" of Mr. *Burke*. It is novelty of combination in the history of facts; but not novelty of combination in the history of cause and effect. It is an additional argument in support of the assertion, that popular revolutions are consequences of the revolutions of tyranny and oppression. In *France*, two† revolutions took place at the same time; because two† kinds of tyranny domineered together, and therefore two† revolutions were necessary. The

* And yet, now we are to hate them for throwing their slavery and their wooden shoes away!!!

† I might say three. But I omit the ecclesiastical tyranny, because it does not fall immediately in the way of my argument; and because the same reasoning will evidently apply in this instance as in the others.

nobility,

nobility, by “ their natural ignorance, their indolence, and contempt of all civil government*,” and still more by their unbounded rapacity, their wanton insolence, their barbarous exactions, and all-desolating pride—or, in the language of my quotation, by *the rapine, oppression, ambition, and adulteries*, which they indulged *without respect or consideration of justice or civility*, had brought themselves into general abhorrence and detestation, even before any *conjurations and conspiracies against the prince* had arisen. They had made themselves partners in the guilt, and were therefore partners in the punishment of the tyranny. Instead of being a bulwark between the prince and the people, to preserve the latter from the oppression of the former, they were indeed the chief battery from which the destructive engines of Gallic tyranny spread ruin and desolation through the land.

And are these the persons whom Mr. *Burke* pretends “ are so like the nobility of this country, “ that nothing but the latter, probably not speaking quite such good French, could enable us “ to find out any difference†?” I would not for the whole pension of this “ defender of the order,”

* Montesq. *Spir. Laws*, b. ii. c. 4.

† Letter, &c. p. 59. Mr. *B.* it is true, applies the comparison only to the Duke of *Bedford*; but it applies either to all or none.

that

that this comparison should be just: for if it were—if the titled great of Britain were what those of France have been, then should I exclaim, in the bitterness of my soul, that their crimes and their oppressions ought no longer to be endured—no longer protected by the laws and institutions of the land; but that they, also, in their turn, ought to be driven into ignominious banishment.

Never—never (let us hope) will our nobility and great proprietors realize the simile Mr. *Burke* has so imprudently suggested. Never—never (let us hope) will the vices, the profligacy, the insolent oppression, and immeasurable rapacity of the French aristocracy ravage and depopulate this country: for if they should, not all the rhapsodies of pensioned eloquence—not all the treason and sedition bills of *Pitt* and *Grenville*, can avert the terrible catastrophe.

But the danger to this country comes from another quarter. It is not from the aristocracy, properly so called, that we have most to dread. It is not even from the prerogatives of the executive power. It is from the oligarchy of rotten borough-mongers. It is from the corruption of that which ought to be the representative branch of the legislature. This it is that is undermining (I must not say has undermined) the constitution and liberties of Britain. This it is that is realizing,

with

with fatal accuracy, the prophesy of *Montesquieu*--
 "As all human things have an end, the state we
 "are speaking of will lose its liberty. It will
 "perish. Have not *Rome*, *Sparta*, and *Carthage*,
 "perished? It will perish, when the legislative
 "power shall be more corrupted than the exe-
 "cutive*†"

Such, at least, are the apprehensions that have crowded upon my mind. Such are the dangers which, during the last five years, I have endeavoured, with the most laborious diligence, to avert, by the only means through which they can be averted--by provoking popular enquiry †; by rousing, to the utmost of my power, the energies of peaceful, but determined intellect; and by endeavouring, with all the little persuasion I could muster, to wean my fellow citizens from the prejudices and delusions of party--from all idolatrous attachment to names and individuals, and to fix their hearts and affections upon principle alone--the great principle of philanthropy--the principle of universal good--the source and fountain of all just government--of *equal rights, equal laws, reciprocal respect, and reciprocal protection*.

These are the principles I have endeavoured to inculcate, in political societies, at public meet-

* *Sp. Laws*, book xi. c. 6.

† See further elucidations of this subject in my "*Vindication of the Natural and Constitutional Rights of Britons*," p. 90, &c.

ings; in my pamphlets, in my conversations, and in that lecture-room, (that school of vice, as Mr. Burke is pleased to call it) at which he is so anxious "that no *grown* gentleman or nobleman "of our time should think of finishing whatever "may have been left incomplete at the old universities of his country *."

If to have inculcated these principles with a diligence and perseverance which no difficulties could check, no threats nor persecutions could controul---if to have been equally anxious to preserve the spirit of the people, and the tranquillity of society---to disseminate the information that might conduct to reform, and to check the intemperance that might lead to tumult---if these are crimes dangerous to the existence of the state, the minister did right to place me at the bar of the Old Bailey: and, if perseverance in these principles is perseverance in crime, it may be necessary to place me again in the same situation of disgrace and peril. If to assemble my fellow citizens for the purpose of political discussion---if to strip off the mask from state hypocrisy and usurpation---if to expose apostacy, confute the sophisms of court jugglers and ministerial hirelings, and drag forth to public notice the facts that demonstrate the enormity and rapid progress of that corruption under which we groan, and by means of which *the rich are tottering on the verge of bankruptcy, and*

* Letter, &c. p. 35.

the poor are sinking into the abyss of famine--if this is keeping a public school of vice and licentiousness *, then was it right in ministers to endeavour to seal up the doors of that school with an act of parliament; then was it right that I should be held up to public odium and public terror, by the inflammatory declamations of the *Powises* and *Windhams*, the tedious sophistries of the *Scotts* and *Mitfords*, the virulent pamphlets of the *Burkes* and *Reeveses*, and the conjectural defamations of *Godwin* †. But upon what sort of pretence, even the inflamed and prejudiced mind of Mr. *Burke*, can regard me as "a wicked pander to avarice and ambition ‡," I am totally at a loss to conjecture. I have at-

* Letter, &c. p. 36.

† It is painful to see such a name, in such a list. But if men of great powers, however sincerely attached to liberty, voluntarily, by cold abstraction and retirement, cherish a *feebleness of spirit*, which shrinks from the creations of its own fancy, and a solitary vanity, which regards every thing as vice, and mischief, and inflammation, but what accords with its own most singular speculations; and if, under these impressions, and regardless of the consequences to an isolated individual, assailed already by all the malice and persecutions of powerful corruption, they will send such bitter defamations into the world, as are contained in the first 22 pages of "*Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills*," they must expect to be classed with other calumniators. The bitterest of my enemies has never used me so ill as this friend has done. But nothing on earth renders a man so uncandid as the extreme *affectation* of candour.

‡ Letter, &c. p. 47.

tached myself to no party. I have entered into none of the little, paltry squabbles of placemen and oppositionists; by which, alone, profit or promotion can be expected. My heart and soul, it is true, and I believe the heart and soul of every man who entertains one grain of respect for the rights and liberties of mankind, was with the *Whigs* in their conduct and sentiments relative to two bills, to which, as they are now passed into laws, I shall give no *epithet*. I trust they have an epithet, sufficiently descriptive, engraved upon the heart of every *Briton*. I thought, and I still think, that the man must be extravagant, indeed, in his expectations, who was not satisfied with their behaviour in this respect; and particularly with the firm and manly opposition of *Fox*, *Erskine*, and *Lauderdale*: from the first of whom, I confess, I did not expect a conduct so bold and *unequivocal*. If any thing can preserve the party from that perdition into which, by its *cold, half measures*, it has so long been falling, it is persevering in the temper, spirit, and sentiments of *that* opposition. So long as they do persevere in that temper and spirit, I hope, and trust, that the hearts and souls of Britons will continue to be with them. So long as they do so persevere, my heart and soul, for one, will be with them, most undoubtedly:---not as a *partizan*, for that I abhor---but as one who, coinciding with them in a particular principle,

principle, is anxious to neglect no opportunity by which that principle can be promoted. But if ever (which, I trust, will not be the case) they should be again weighed down by that ponderous millstone of aristocracy already described*, which so long hung round their necks, and prevented them from soaring to the heights of consistent principle, INNS and OUTS, WHIGS and TORIES, will become, once more, equal objects of indifference—of contempt!

Thus, then, I have coincided, upon a particular point, with men from whom, upon other subjects, I have widely dissented; and I have even persuaded myself, that if those men persevere in the sentiments and conduct displayed on that occasion, the introduction of Mr. Pitt's and Lord Grenville's bills will ultimately be regarded as proud days for *Britain*. But amidst these feelings, I have forfeited no consistency. I have shrunk from no principle. I have become no "pander to avarice and ambition:" nor have I courted the patronage of wealth or greatness, by relinquishing any particle of that independance, which does, indeed, render me "prouder by far" than all that frippery "of the Herald's College," which Mr. Burke, so scientifically, details †; in as much as the pride of manly principle is su-

* P. 24 to 27.

† Letter, &c. p. 39.

perior to the infantile vanity of the age of toys and baubles.

Neither have I sacrificed to interest nor gratified avarice, by my oratorical pursuits: whatever the narrow-minded and the envious may suppose. What I have received from the public, as the voluntary price of my labours, has been spent in the public cause:—in redeeming myself from the incumbrances produced by incessant persecutions; in alleviating (where I could) the sufferings of other victims; and in the expences with which my exertions have been attended. I may say of my politics as *Goldsmith* of his muse,

“ They found me poor, and still have kept me so.”

But though I murmur not at this, neither should I hold myself a “ pander to avarice and “ ambition,” if I had really been enriched by my lectures. Whatever emolument I might have reaped, surely I also might have said, “ I have not “ received more than I deserve* :” for assuredly every man deserves all that can be got by the honest exercise of his faculties, whether of mind or body. To increase the burthens of an almost starving people, by receiving pensions from the product of public taxes, may be base. To extort money, under pretence of propagating doctrines which those who *must* pay are neither desirous to

* Letter, &c. p. 10.

promote nor willing to hear, may be a species of public robbery: but to derive support, *however liberal*, from a course of public instruction, to which *the only persons who pay are the voluntary pupils*, Mr. Burke, if he had succeeded to that professor's chair, of which, it is said, he was once ambitious, would certainly have been ready to prove, not only blameless, but honourable.

If avarice and ambition had been my ruling passions, it is surely admissible for me, "thus attacked," to say, that with my talent for public speaking, I should not have abandoned, from scruples of principle, the profession of the law; which lays open so fair a field for the gratification of those propensities. If selfish principles actuated my conduct, I needed not the insinuating message of a man (whose eminence in a learned profession ought to have lifted him above the shameful office of a *go-between to male prostitution*) that, "if I chose, I might do something better for myself than delivering public lectures." Even without adopting these words in a sense which, coming from such a quarter, I suppose them to convey—even without becoming what my calumniator has called me—"a pander to avarice and ambition," I have some confidence in my own resources, and I persuade myself that, with my habits of industry, and with my little stock of reputation, I *could* derive a better subsistence from
some

some of the profitable branches of literature, than my politics ever brought me, or ever will bring.

If I have any motives of personal advantage, I deceive myself, and am a fool. If I were to regard myself alone, I believe no act of parliament could affect my interests: and certainly no interest—no reward can compensate for the ravages upon my constitution, occasioned by those exertions in which I have been so incessantly and laboriously employed, or for the necessary sacrifices of social enjoyment—which, as a husband and a father, constitute the dearest gratifications of my soul. But how sweet and alluring soever the blossoms of domestic felicity, we must not, in the selfish enjoyment of our own gay *parterre*, neglect to root out the thorns from the road of the way-faring traveller, who is too heavily laden to stoop and remove them for himself.

I have, therefore, renewed my exertions; and, although an act of parliament has prohibited lectures “on the laws, constitution, government, and policy of *these realms*,” have opened my “school” again, and shall continue to open it, at such intervals as health will permit, to give lectures on the laws, constitutions, government, and policy of *other realms*, which it is not yet prohibited to discuss*; to investigate the *elements of political*

* “Lectures on Classical History,” delivered every *Monday, Wednesday, and Friday*, during Lent; and to be renewed early in

political science, and trace the causes and consequences of the various revolutions which the tyranny and oppressions of various governments have in different ages produced: and though I profess no infallibility—no patent of exemption from occasional flights, or rather flounderings, of verbose nonsense, I think I may venture to promise that “no grown gentleman or nobleman,” who shall be desirous “of finishing,” at Beaufort-buildings, “any thing that may have been left incomplete at the old universities,” will lose his time in listening to such jargon as the following passage, with the exposition of which I shall close this pamphlet.*

“I conceived nothing arbitrarily, nor proposed any thing to be done by the will and pleasure of others, or my own; but by reason, and by reason only. I have ever abhorred, since the first dawn of my understanding, to this its obscure twilight, all the operations of opinion, fancy, inclination, and will, in the affairs of government, where only a sovereign reason, paramount to all forms of legislation and administration, should dictate. Government is made for the very purpose of opposing that reason to will,

in the ensuing Autumn. For the nature and object of these Lectures, and, also, for an explanation of the extent, limit, and operation of Mr. Pitt’s Convention Act, see, “Prospectus,” &c.

* Letter, &c. p. 35.

† Ibid. p. 24.

“and

" and to caprice, in the reformers, or in the reformed; in the governors, or in the governed; in kings, in senates, or in people †!"

In the name of common sense how many gods has Mr. Burke in his mythology?—Who is this *Sovereign Reason*? In which of the seven heavens does she reside? For he has told us that in this blind world she is no where to be found. At first, indeed, I suspected my antagonist (for whom no incongruity, no contradiction is too glaring) of having slipped unawares, into rank democracy; and of describing, by this *new Gallicism*—*Sovereign Reason*, the collective reason of the SOVEREIGN PEOPLE; or, in other words, the concentrated opinion of mankind: but upon looking a little further, I find that this cannot be his meaning, for he expressly says, that "government is made for the very purpose of opposing this [Sovereign] Reason [whatever it is] to will, and to caprice, in the reformers or in the reformed, in the governors or in the governed, in kings, in senates, or in people:"—that is to say in all human beings. Now that which is to oppose the will and caprice of all human beings (or even to decide, in opposition to all human beings, what is *reasonable*, and what is *wilful* and *capricious*) must be either positive, existing *institution*, or it must be some *being* who is more than human. That it cannot be positive, existing *institution*, which

which is to be regarded as the standard, is evident; because Mr. *Burke* talks of “ reformers “ and reformed;” and, *if positive, existing institution is the standard of Sovereign Reason, there can be no reform at all*; for every attempt to reform is, upon this hypothesis, an opposition of the will and caprice of the reformers (whether kings, senates, or people) to this Sovereign Reason, which such reform must inevitably alter. What was this reason, then, which was not the operation of the opinions either of others or his own, but without consulting which he neither conceived any of *his* reforms, nor proposed any thing to be done?—Why does he thus bewilder our judgment, without amusing our imagination? Why leave us benighted in these cold fogs of mysticism? If he is inclined to impose upon us a belief in something more than mere vulgar human faculty, by which his reforms, and the all-perfect wisdom of government, are to controul the will and caprice of the human race, why not strike us at once “ in the old dashing “ stile*,” with some flight of inventive fancy, that we may at least have some amusement in exchange for the common sense we are to surrender. Could not *Numa Pompilius* have lent him his *Egeria*? or *Socrates* his *Dæmon*? or *St. Dunstan*

* Letter, &c. p. 48.

his red hot tongs, to lead the devil about the country, for the amusement of gaping rustics?

Of all the fictions, romances, and impositions, that bewilder mankind, the most insipid, as well as the most absurd, are these dull, canting, metaphysical rhapsodies.

The reader will judge between us; but, for my ~~own~~ part, I have ever considered reason as nothing more than ~~one of~~ the operations of the mind, employed in the research, comparison, and digestion, of ~~that~~ knowledge by which ^{efficient} ~~solid and useful~~ understanding can alone be produced. For the sanity or perfection of this faculty, I ^{believe} ~~have always considered~~ that there is no positive test or standard; and that the most confident deduction of the most cultivated reason is but "an opinion" still: except in as much as relates to that *one science*, which is known to admit of demonstration. Considering, therefore, that all questions of government, must ultimately be decided either by the aggregated *reason* (or as Mr. *Burke* may call it, the aggregate *will* or *caprice*) of society, or, as is more commonly the case, by the *reason*, *will*, or *caprice* of the governors; and, considering, also, that the multitude can have no interest in reasoning wrong; I have thought it of the highest importance to awaken my fellow citizens, in this time of peril and affliction, to
the

the exercise of their faculties on such questions as are of the greatest consequence to the general preservation; and to inculcate, not as matter of dogmatical opinion, but of useful enquiry, such sentiments and doctrines as to me appeared conducive to public happiness. This, notwithstanding the calumny and persecution with which I may be assailed, I shall still continue to do, not rashly, I hope—I am sure not fearfully; varying my means, according to the circumstances under which new impediments and new restrictions may place the unshrinking advocates of freedom. Among other things, I have thought it my duty to give some answer to this seditious and inflammatory libel of Mr. *Burke* (for so to me it appears in the most eminent and alarming degree;) making it, at the same time, a vehicle for the inculcation of principles favourable at once, I believe, to the *Rights of Man* and the *interests of humanity*—for they are indeed body and soul, and, though sophists may attempt to set them in opposition, they can never have a separate existence.

I would fain hope that this intemperate letter, and the answers it has provoked, and will provoke, may rouse, once more, a general spirit of enquiry, so essential at this crisis; and that, notwithstanding the temporary panic produced by the new treason and sedition acts, we shall return

to